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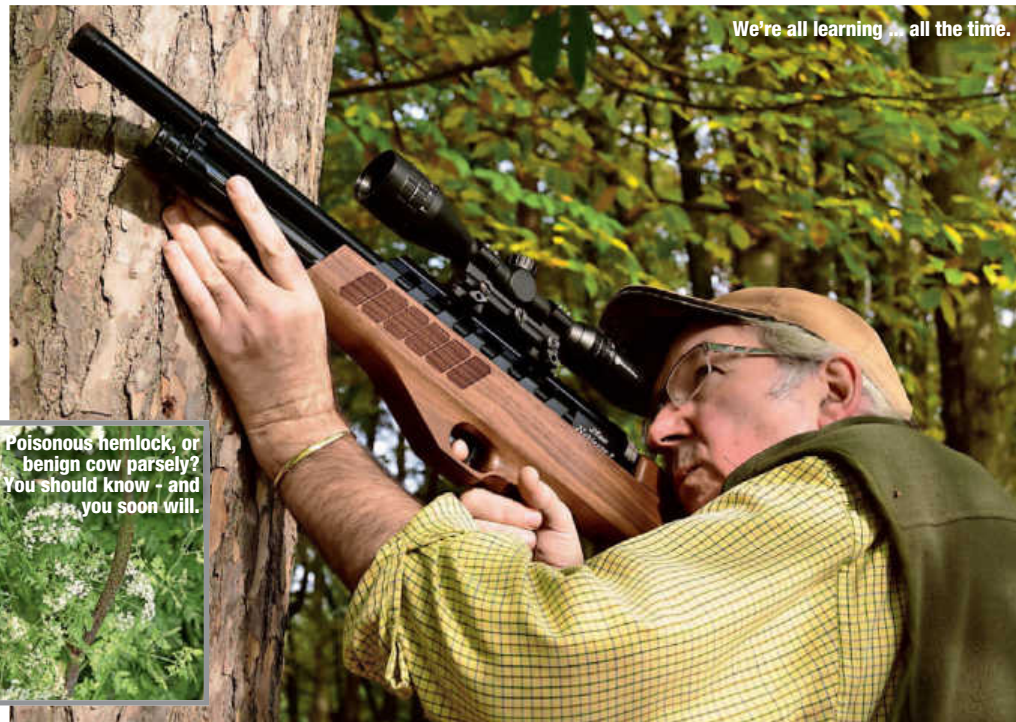
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We're all learning ... all the time.

THE EDITOR SAYS...

I'm pleased to say that there's an absolute ton of imparted smarts, technique, knowledge and airgun-based wisdom in this month's Airgun World, so make sure to get your studying head on, sit back and be prepared to absorb loads of useful stuff.

Jim Tyler, our Lord of the Springs, weighs in with his celebrated Technical Airgun series, and also finds time to fix a bent barrel. Our airgun student, young Naylor Ball, is exploring the effect of wind on his pellets and his stalking abilities, while gamekeeper, Steve Newton, reveals the greatest lessons he's learned over his many years in the countryside.

Tim Finley is also studying wind-effect, in the conclusion to his excellent mini-series, and Dave Barham's learning all the time, and passing it on, as he rediscovers his love of hunting. Now add the tests, features, news, letters and everything else we've crammed into another bumper edition, and I'm confident that you'll come away from our December issue with more than enough to think about. You'll also have plenty of valuable lessons to put into action in the never-ending quest to improve.

As ever, please let us know what you think about it; I promise we consider every communication.

WEED ALL ABOUT IT

On an entirely unrelated subject; do you know your wild plants – well, do you? Up until ten years ago, I was rubbish at weed-spotting but I'm half-decent at it now and it's been a terrific thing for me since the day I first studied my Observer's Book of Wild Flowers. Yes, really. And no, I haven't finally lost it; in fact, I think everyone should have a working knowledge of what grows on out there. Did you see what I did, then? Please yourself.

Knowing what grows in the countryside can be seriously handy, though. At its basic level, you don't want to find yourself idly chewing on a stem of hemlock or giant hogweed, because both are packed with toxins. In fact, there's enough toxin in a shoulder-high hemlock plant to do a person very serious damage, or worse. Socrates, the famous Greek philosopher, was killed with hemlock poison, and as many as 40,000 calls a year come in to our medical facilities due to concerns about wild plant toxins. So, it's as well to know the score around such plants. To that end, we'll be doing a feature on this subject when the lovely springtime rolls around once more. You can't accuse this magazine of not looking forward.

AND FINALLY ...

Our decision not to do a 'Christmas special' every year rolls on. We think splatting a few sprigs of holly and some fake snow around the pages is a bit naff, but more importantly, it's extremely annoying considering we have Christmas shoved down our throats from November onward. We've always wanted to preserve this magazine as a haven from that hype, but again, if a Christmas special is what our readers want, then that's what we'll give them. Your thoughts, please, via all usual channels! Meanwhile, have a great one, until the next one.

Bless. OK, that'll do for Christmas-themed features. Bah humbug?



Terry Doe
 Editor

THIS MONTH ...



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HARDMAN**

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FLEECE

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The Grizzly is aptly named, for as soon as you put it on, it feels as if you have stepped into the arms of a bear - minus the agh!

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Comes in a set of three including leggings, and a short sleeve and long sleeve top. Made from Bamboo, these thermals are warm, quick drying, breathable and have natural 'skin stopper' properties.

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HEADWEAR

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POINTS OF YOU

THE AIRGUN WORLD FORUM FOR YOUR RANTS, RAVES AND Q&As

HAPPY TO HELP

I'm new to the sport and have recently purchased my first rifle. I'm 20 and suffer with back pain, and as you can imagine, it has forced me to 'slow down' a bit. At 20, it's far from ideal, and because of this I had to drop a few hobbies, to my regret. I had been thinking of new things to get into, alongside fishing, when I come across air rifle shooting, so I did a bit of research and decided to give it a go. I've visited a few clubs already and am now choosing which one I want to join. Every club I've visited has been awesome, and everyone I have spoken to in the sport has been welcoming, and happy to help - it's got to be said, you're a good ol' bunch! I'm over the moon that I can do this sport with no problems from my back, and that's why I like it because no matter who you are, you can take part. There aren't many sports like that around. I love that you can shoot alongside anyone and everyone, from all walks of life. I've met loads of new people and look forward to meeting many more. I've been spreading the word around friends and family about how great I've found the sport to be, and already got three more people into it. I look forward to progressing and so far, I've picked up many great things from the magazine that have helped me to gain knowledge and to improve my shooting. Thanks to all the people who have helped me - and thank you for the great magazine!

MORGAN ROBERT KIDD.

Young, old, male, female, expert and beginner, they're all welcome within our sport.



READERS' RIFLES

I was wondering if it would be possible to do a short write-up of my rifle for an article in Airgun World. I have spent a lot of time and money on it, it's really personalised to me, and I think it would make for an interesting read for your readers. It's an HW98. I can send some pictures and some info if you would like. I look forward to hearing from you.

PERRAN NORMANSHIRE

That sounds like just the thing we want for our 'Readers' Rifles' feature. Perran, so send us five or six good photos, between 1MB and 3MB each, and either 500 or 1000 words describing what you've had done to your rifle, why you had it done, and what it brings to your shooting, plus anything else you think our readers might be interested in, and we'll do the rest. That offer goes for everyone else out there, too! - Ed

STOATALLY AWARE

I was out shooting this morning and sat in woodland waiting for some squirrel action to come my way, and after ten minutes, or so, I caught sight of some movement on the ground at the base of a tree. Next thing, I saw what at first fleeting glimpse looked like a rat, so I raised my air rifle and took a look through the scope, finger poised over the safety, hoping to get a clear shot if the chance presented. It was only about 15 yards away, partially hidden by foliage and not quite in focus through my scope, but I could see it clearly enough to know it was not a rat, so I lowered my rifle. I sat and watched it rummaging around on the floor for a few seconds, and then it ascended the tree at an impressive rate. It was only then I realised the 'rat' was, in fact, a stoat. I felt it was worth mentioning for two reasons; firstly, I'm not sure how widely known it is that stoats are very capable tree climbers, and secondly, it serves as a reminder that the responsible hunter should always ensure positive identification of any potential quarry before considering taking a shot.

GUY SINGLETON

HUNTING RESPONSIBILITY

After finding the dusty March 2011 issue of Airgun World, I once again found myself drawn in to the allure of shooting. Two months on, and I've managed to rope in a work colleague

LETTER OF THE MONTH

WIN THE JACK PYKE HUNTERS BOOTS

I've found a way to increase the pleasure of my hunting, and to make me more efficient as well. I take along a mate, we share the hunting duties, and we share the shooting, literally swapping from being the shooter, to being the ghillie, and it really works.

I found this system by accident when one of the dads at my daughter's school noticed my Airgun World in the car as I gave him a lift home one day. It turned out that he, too, was an airgunner, although he had nowhere to hunt, so I invited him along to share my shoot. As we walked quietly around, my new friend took over the laser rangefinders I use and put me on two rabbits I would otherwise not have spotted.

By way of thanks, after a plinking session with my

Air Arms S510 – my friend has an S410 – he took over the shooting, whilst I spotted for him and carried the five rabbits we managed that day, in my rucksack. It's a brilliant system and it makes a great change from hunting on my own. It also allows a fellow airgunner to enjoy some excellent sport, as well as giving me a new, like-minded friend. I can highly recommend it!

Andrew Charles

Great stuff, Andrew, and well done for sharing your shoot. Yes, I can see how the 'extra eyes' thing can work, and with your 'ghillie' doing the spotting and carrying, you're free to concentrate on the shooting. Nice one, mate, and enjoy those excellent boots. - Ed

Thanks to the generosity of the people at Jack Pyke, we're able to give away a pair of the brand new Hunters boots every month to the reader we consider to have sent the best letter. That's 120 quid's worth of excellent footwear, just for letting us know what's on your mind. You've got to like those numbers!

So, have a think about what you want to say and get in touch, by email or letter. Don't write pages of text because we'll have to be purely yours. State shoe size and

address, and it's great if you can include a photo, too. I promise we read every communication we get.

If your letter wins, you'll get these superb boots, which feature full grain leather uppers, a Vibram Trek Hunter rubber sole, a 100% waterproof, breathable, Hydroguard membrane, odour-resistant Agion antimicrobial inners and Thinsulate liners. There's even more to these amazing boots, as you'll find out when you win a pair. Good luck!



Something on your mind? Send us your letters and we'll share your views with the readership. Write to: Points Of You, Evolution House, 2-6 Easthampstead Road, Wokingham, Berks. RG40 2EG. Or email terry.doe@archant.co.uk

TOOLBOX ENVY

I've noticed that some of those who shoot at my club turn up with a toolbag packed with all sorts of wrenches, spanners, multi-tools, seals, lubes and assorted 'pit crew' paraphernalia. Is this really

Nice toolkit, and every bit of it potentially useful.



MAC FLEETWOOD

Well, 'Mac' I think you've come up with an incredibly useful idea there, mate. The essential tools that airgunners need really would make a great article, and I'll get one of our writers on to that right away. As for the need for such equipment, all I can say is, it's incredibly frustrating when a shooting session has to be lost for want of a spanner ... or ah 'O' ring ... or a hex wrench - Ed

to the sport, who has since splashed out on two rifles for use at Kibworth plinking range, and permissions near where we work - real beginner's luck! The only minor bugbear I have found in this marvellous hobby is with the differences in articles between competition shooting and hunting. Now, I'm not taking aim at your magazine, but the way the two are presented in the media in general, such as the videos on YouTube. I can't seem to wrap my head around the complexity and fine-tuning of the HFT and FT disciplines, compared to the rather lax portrayal of hunting. Surely the same care, if not more, should go into hunting animals rather than your score at the end of the course. I feel that the effort involved in weighing pellets, cleaning your gun, and so on, should be enforced in all the hunting articles. I had only learned about these things while trawling the net for the best ways to beat my mate at competitions, but in my opinion, and I'm sure many reading this magazine will agree, the utmost care needs to be enforced to ensure maximum precision when taking a life, to get the most humane kill possible. Great magazine.

SAM ROLLASON

Sam - we're all about our responsibilities as hunters, I assure you. Don't forget, the competition shooter has to take every shot at every target presented, and at ranges usually beyond those used in the hunting field, unlike the hunter, who, if worthy of the name, will decline all shots he is not fully confident of converting into a clean kill. I agree that full awareness and plenty of training is required to hunt, but don't imagine for a minute that the dedicated hunter is 'lax' in his approach to his responsibilities. - Ed

BLACK SQUIRRELS?

My hunting partner, who is not normally prone to flights of fancy, swears he saw a black squirrel on our shoot, recently. He reckons he got to within 20 yards of it and could have despatched it as we do all grey squirrels on our patch, but he said it had the features

of a red squirrel, including the characteristic fluffy ears. Is this possible, or do I tell my mate that he should have gone to Specsavers?

ROBERT TROTT

Well, Robert, here's a photo I took of a black squirrel that fits your mate's description, perfectly, only this one was scampering about a wood in Nuremburg, Germany, rather than England. Perhaps there are escapees in our country, but this is the first I've heard of one. Any other readers spotted a black squirrel? Do let us know! - Ed



The black squirrel certainly exists, but has it made it to the UK?

WET WEATHER WUSSES?

I went to the Midland Game Fair this year and when I saw the competitors for the European Field Target Championship, I couldn't help having a chuckle to myself about what happens to all of that technology they use when the great British weather gets to it. I bet they run for cover when the clouds open, because I'm sure all of that fine-tuned gear couldn't handle a soaking, even if those shooters could!

MIKE STANDING

Well, Mike, you need to think again, mate, because »



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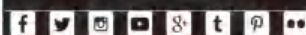


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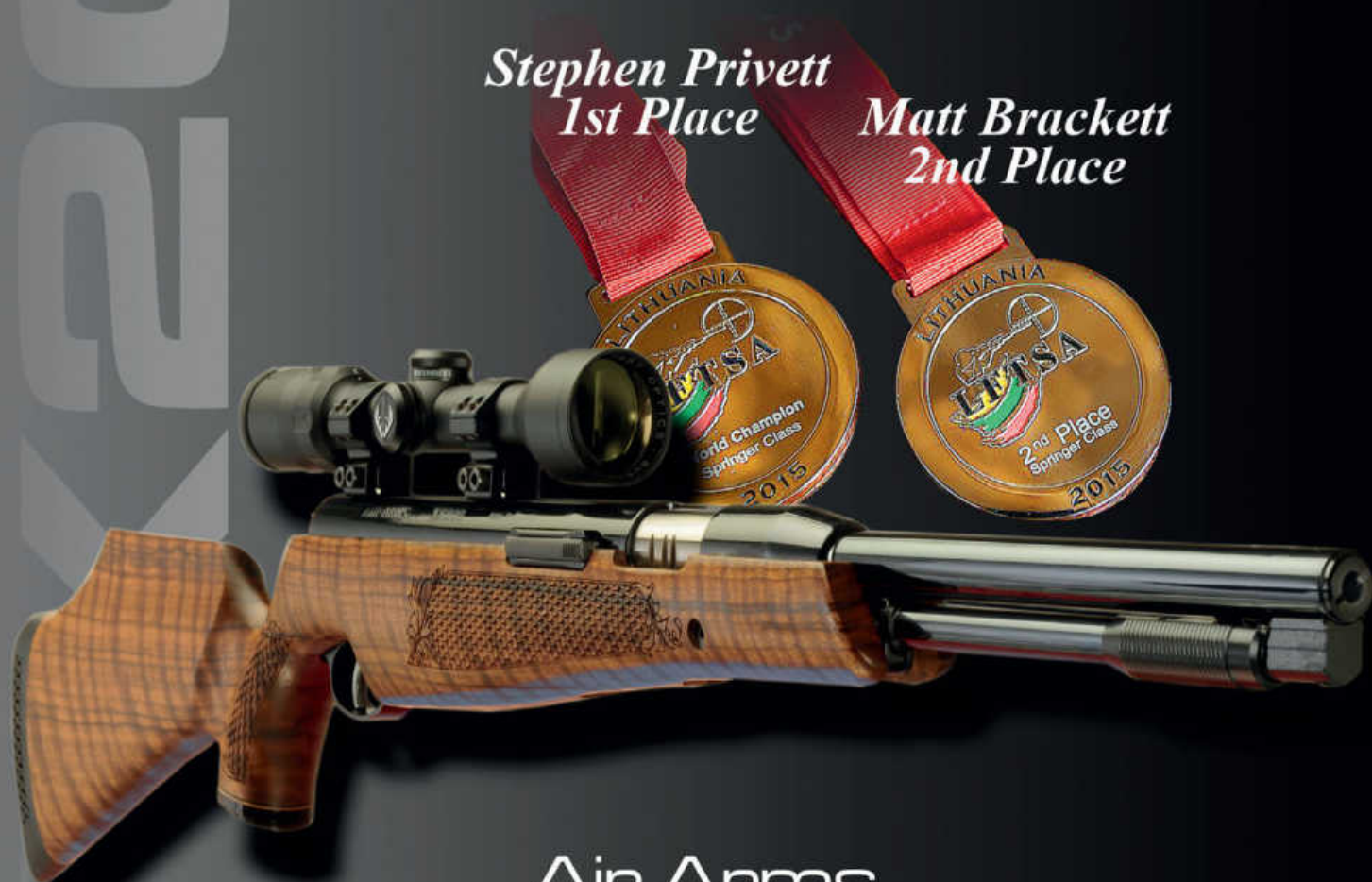


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*and the winners are ...
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*Stephen Privett
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*Matt Brackett
2nd Place*



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Illustration is of a carbine model - scope not included. Medal images supplied courtesy of Audrius Turskas.



Air Arms, Unit 5/6 Hailsham Industrial Park, Diplocks Way, Hailsham, East Sussex, BN27 3JF. www.air-arms.co.uk



those FT, and their HFT counterparts, are out there shooting, whatever the weather. Rain, snow or blow, they get down and unbelievably dirty to follow their beloved sport, and those rifles are built to handle it, too. In fact, those HFT and FT shooters are out there in conditions that would send any right-thinking hunter scuttling for shelter. – Ed



These shooters don't run away from the rain - they just get down and dirty!

IMPOSSIBLE HEAD SHOTS?

I have to take issue with your contention in last month's magazine that head shots should always be our first consideration, mainly because such a requirement is often impossible! What about a feeding pigeon, in a tree or on the ground, when its head is invariably moving? The neck shot is always a better option then, surely?

I agree that with rabbits, squirrels, and even rats, we should always go for head shots, but birds are a different matter entirely and whilst I'd never advocate the body shot, unless it's between the 'shoulder blades', the shot to the neck has served me perfectly over the years.

MARTIN WALKER-BRIGHT

So, Martin, when those birds' heads are moving around as you claim, do you imagine the necks connected to them somehow manage to remain still? I assure you they don't.



Yes, the head moves when the bird is feeding, but so does the neck!

The neck is moving, extending, curving, you name it, and it's always less than half the size of the head, plus it's encased in a concealing sheath of feathers and skin, so you can't actually see it. How can that be a more reliable target than the skull? Sorry, Martin, we'll have to disagree on this one. Personally, I'd rather miss the chance of a pigeon than take 'compromise' shots. – Ed

GROUP HYSTERIA

I'm driving myself mad trying to shoot the famed, or more likely fabled, 'one-hole group'. How come so many, including the editor of this very magazine, lay claim to such groups when I'm finding it impossible? Please don't tell me my Air Arms TX200 isn't capable of it, because that's nonsense. So, tell us Terry, what's the big secret to these so-called one-hole groups you elitists seem to produce at the drop of a hat!

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST

Well, first, your TX200 will, indeed, produce one-hole groups. I've done so with my TX, and I've seen plenty of others do the same with theirs, so that isn't in dispute. Next, there's no 'big secret'; it's just a matter of perfect pellets, good technique, and sympathetic weather conditions coming together at the same time. Also, if the pellet holes are touching on the target card, and you shoot enough pellets, you'll end up with a single hole. If you're actually talking about shooting pellet after pellet through exactly the same hole, then that's a different thing entirely. I've managed that a few times, but not many. Ragged, single-holers, though, are entirely achievable, I promise. – Ed



Another few accurately-placed pellets will turn this into a single-hole group, which is about as good as it gets in the real world.

HOGWASH?

What on earth is the point of washing our pellets? Like the editor, I remember doing perfectly well enough with an unwashed box of 'Beatal Waisted' back in the day, so don't tell me that today's computer-controlled pellet

production is giving us ammo that needs to be washed, rinsed, sorted and lubricated before it will shoot properly! Frankly, I think all of this pellet preparation lark is a load of pointless nonsense and those who do it have an OCD problem!

HENRY TENNISON

Henry, look at the photo of what comes from a couple of hundred high-quality pellets after a quick wash. Do you really want that going into your rifling? I don't. Also, the preparation process weeds out the deformed pellets, and the ones left have a uniform coating of the correct lubricant, the nature of which differs between spring and pre-charged guns. Finally, I assure you that shooting prepared pellets makes for a satisfied mind when it comes to placing those shots exactly where you want them to go. Yes, pellet prep' is entirely worth it, Henry. Try it – you'll see! – Ed



The loose lead residue from just a handful of pellets after washing. Do you want this in your barrel?

MORE ON HEAD SHOTS

I fully agree with your stance on not taking body shots when hunting live quarry. I've, regrettably, seen rabbits run after being hit in the wrong place with a .22 rimfire, yet a .177 legal limit rifle will do the job every time as long as that pellet is properly placed – and for rabbits, that's always the head. Please keep up the pressure on those who take body shots, especially on rabbits, because I firmly believe these shooters do this because they don't think they're good enough to produce the required degree of accuracy. If that's the case, they shouldn't be hunting at all, or at the very least, they should restrict themselves to ranges where their accuracy will do the job humanely.

Finally, training is the real remedy for a lack of marksmanship, not a new rifle or more power. Increase your efficiency, the rifles are already far better than we are!

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WHAT'S GOING ON?

THERE'S SO MUCH TO PACK INTO THE NEWS THIS MONTH!

GET YOUR GOLDEN TICKET!

As we told you last month Air Arms is running a fantastic competition for 10 readers of Airgun World. The winners will

get an 'access all areas' factory visit and a delicious lunch, followed by a question and answer session with industry experts. To find out how you can enter go to page 63. Good luck!



Turn to page 63 to become a winner and visit the Air Arms factory.

HANDSOME HUGGETS

Andrew Huggett has the reputation of building the nicest and quietest silencers around. Just in time for Christmas, he's released 150 special models that fit the common 1/2" UNF thread. They come with the Huggett name and the year '2016' printed black on black into the side, making them

even more distinctive than usual. They're available from The Airgun Centre, Blackpool Air Rifles, Ronnie Sunshines, and Solware, or you can order them through your local gun dealer. There is no premium pricing on this special edition, it's the standard £90 plus p&p. www.huggettprecisionproducts.co.uk



These special edition silencers are available now.

CUTTING-EDGE INFO

Anybody needing a new knife, be it a simple folder or a collector's item should get the Sporting Cutlery's new catalogue. It's full of new products from Azero and Camillus brands and offers some interesting designs not available before. Big sellers such as Buck, Leatherman, Cudeman, EKA and, of course, Blade Tech have large sections as well. All the products can be viewed on their website, along with a selection of antique, pre-owned, and collectible knives and tools. If you would like a free copy of the new knife and tool catalogue (issue 7) from Sporting Cutlery, please

telephone 01492 640 664 or email sales@stsnorthwales.co.uk. Alternatively, visit www.sportingcutlery.co.uk



MOORE DOES MORE

Simon Moore, the MD of BSA Guns went without an alcoholic drink for the whole of October (Go sober for October) and has now seen the full extent of the money he raised in sponsorship. Thanks to the fantastic support of friends, family and our wonderful industry, he raised £3230. Well done, Simon! That made him number one fundraiser in West Midlands, and 9th in the whole of the U.K., out of over 58,000 participants who signed up! What a fantastic effort and the funs will go to Macmillan Cancer Support, a wonderful organisation that helps so many people every day. Simon would especially like to thank everyone in the gun trade who sponsored him. Next month, we'll bring you a report on the winner of the sealed bid to win the one-off Blue Star rifle that

contributed so much to this incredible total.

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OCTOBER S410 COMBO WINNER!

OUR OCTOBER SPOT THE DIFFERENCE WINNER HAS WON HIMSELF A BRAND NEW AIR ARMS S410 COMBO!

The lucky winner for October is Patrick Glynn from Leicestershire, and he's been an avid Airgun World reader since the early 1980s, when he recalls, for him it was all about saving every penny he could to buy the latest German springer and hoping he could scrape up enough to do so without selling whatever rifle he was using at the time! Patrick also remembers owning three Optima Moonlighter scopes, and says he wishes he had them today. Well, Patrick, there's an excellent scope and mounts that comes with your prize rifle, and we're sure you'll get on just fine with your fantastic new combo!

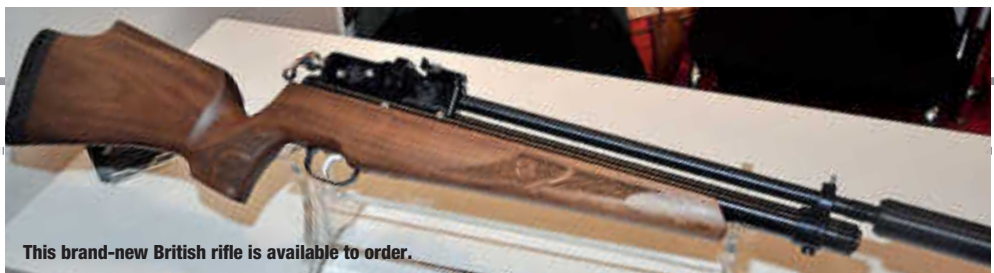
**SEE
P16**

FOR ANOTHER GREAT PRIZE!



BRAND NEW'MATIC

Pneumatic Ballistics is an Essex-based company with a good reputation for offering retro-fit magazines, silencers and other high-quality accessories. They've now taken the plunge and made a complete rifle which looks



This brand-new British rifle is available to order.

very smart. It follows the traditional barrel-over-reservoir layout, with nicely finished metal work complementing an oiled walnut stock. The prototype we saw had

open sights fitted which is unusual these days. It hasn't yet been named, but is now available on a 3 to 4 week delivery time. It's great to see another British rifle being

offered, so well done chaps! RRP £885.00

For more information call Pneumatic Ballistics on 01493 733 462.

GREY-T OPTICS

Firearm giants, Sig Sauer, has made the difficult move into the world of shooting optics with a new range of sporting scopes. The first thing you notice about these scopes is the colour, a smart gunmetal/titanium grey, and it really looks the part against the Sig graphics and chunky, finger-friendly turrets and collars. Internally, fully multi-coated lenses sit in specially toughened mountings within a purged, nitrogen-filled, totally weatherproof body. The range is comprehensive and we'll be selecting the most

popular formats for a test in the very near future. Priced between £200 and £450, these Sig Sauer scopes are serious contenders for your hunting armoury.

Call Highland Outdoors on: sales@highlandoutdoors.co.uk

The grey finish makes the SIG scopes stand out from the crowd.



SIG firearms have made the move into sporting optics.

SUPER VALUE SLING

Owners of BSA rifles will be pleased to see that their favourite manufacturer has a new padded rifle sling to take the weight of your gun. It proudly bears the company's piled arms logo, and comes fitted with

quick detach swivels ready to fit to the studs in your stock. It's also great value at just £15.00 www.bsaguns.co.uk

BSA's new gun sling includes swivels making it great value.



STOP PRESS ... STOP PRESS

Just as we are going to press we heard from the Northern Shooting show team that the HFT Masters series will be holding a competition at the show. The

photograph we saw of the venue looked beautiful, with lots of space to set out those tricky targets that make the sport so challenging and addictive.

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COMPATTO COMPLETEO!

We've seen some pre-production prototypes of the exciting new Brocock Compatto and now we've seen a finished gun. It's an interesting design, like a semi-bull pup, achieved by moving the trigger assembly 4" forward. This makes for a neat

and compact rifle, but with more conventional handling than a full bull pup. We're told that they'll be in the shops during November at £589.00. Look out for a full review as soon as we can get our hands on one. www.brocock.co.uk

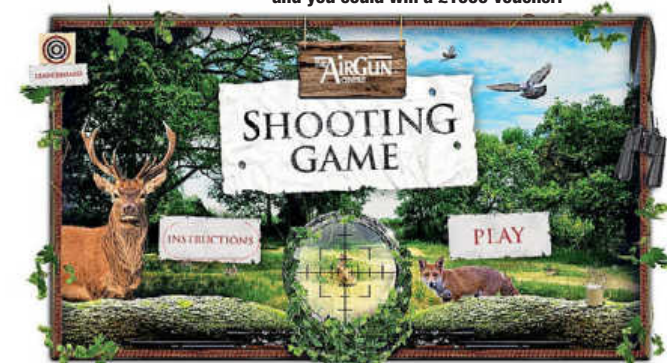


The Brocock Compatto will be in the shops this month.



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GAME FOR A GRAND?

The Airgun Centre is offering an incredible £1000 prize to the person who gets the highest scope on their video game. Simply visit their website: www.theairguncentre.co.uk and play

the game as many times as you like. It's great fun, free to enter, and on Christmas Eve the winner will be contacted to tell them that their £1000 prize voucher is ready. What a Christmas present that will be!



This add-on stock for the Alecto will be with us soon

STABLE TABLE

Zeroing and testing are always best done from a good bench rest, but they can be impossible to transport to your shooting permission.

American shooting accessory specialists, Caldwell, has a new answer to that dilemma. The Stable Table has three legs that resist rocking, whilst the sturdy, steel construction avoids flex. The padded seat can be adjusted from 16" to 22" so should fit most people comfortably. The plastic table has a raised edge to stop pellets rolling off whilst being strong enough to support the heaviest rifle. It looks like just the thing the Airgun World team needs.

RRP £299.00 Carrying bag £45.99

For more information, visit www.edgarbrothers.com.



Getting the perfect zero in the field just got a lot easier with the Stable Table.

READY, STEADY SHOOT!

If you own a Zoraki or an Alecto then this new product will interest you. It's an add-on, shoulder stock that looks like a permanent part once fitted. It's adjustable for pull length and cheek piece height,

and makes the pistol very stable on aim. The material it's made from is a good match for the pistol, making a very smart pairing. We don't have a release date yet but we're told it will retail for £99.00.

www.highlandoutdoors.co.uk

COYOTE DIY

The Gamo Coyote is a high-quality, pre-charged pneumatic rifle available at a very modest price. It's been selling like hot cakes since its release, but some customers asked if it could be offered with a 1/2" UNF thread on the barrel, rather than be fitted with the fixed Gamo Whisper silencer. Ever keen to

keep their customers happy, they've done just that

protect the threads until you're ready to fit a silencer.

remains the same at £399.00 www.gamo.com



You'll soon be able to order a Coyote tactical with a threaded muzzle to take a silencer



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WIN!

A JKHAN NOBLESSE B COMBO WORTH £900!



We've decided to continue with the postal-only entry system, but if you want the text-entry competition format back, please let us know. We produce *Airgun World* for you, and we do our best to give you what you want, so please let us know your thoughts and we'll change things to suit the preferences of our readership. So far, it seems that most of you are happy with the traditional postal entry format, so that's how it will remain until the readers want to change it.

Meanwhile, how about this for a fantastic prize combi? It's the brand-new Jkhan Noblesse B - and this time, 'B' stands for 'Black' as well as 'Bullpup', as you can see. This rifle carries a rubberised, hardwood stock, and every one of the features displayed by the rifle in our editor's test this month, including a superbly consistent, 10-shot, sidelever action, fully-shrouded barrel, and ingenious, two-stage adjustable trigger, and that brilliant Picatinny/Weaver intermount. It's supplied with a quality scope and mounts - and you can win it all for just £1.50! So, spot those differences and get that entry form in!

SO EASY TO ENTER!

Simply spot-the-difference and enter by post - like we did back in the good old days!

Spot the six differences between the photos below and circle them with a pen. Then cut out the completed form and post it to us. Entry costs just £1.50 per go - cheques and postal orders made payable to '*Airgun World*' - and you can enter as many times as you like by photocopying the entry form. As a bonus; for every five postal entries you submit, you get one free - i.e six entries for just £7.50!



POST FORM

Airgun World Competition, Evolution House, 2-6 Easthampstead Road, Wokingham, Berks RG40 2EG

Your Name
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Closing date: 8th of January 2016

☐ Tick if you have a subscription to *Airgun World*

What would you like to see in *Airgun World*?

Simply write your suggestions below, or list your comments on a separate sheet of paper, and send it with your competition entry.

There are six differences between the two photos. Simply draw a circle around them as you spot them, then send in your completed entry form. The winner will be drawn from all of the correct entries received before the closing date.

Terms and Conditions:

The winner will be published in the February issue. Competition closes at midnight on 8th January 2016. Usual terms and conditions apply - visit <http://www.airgunshooting.co.uk/home/terms-and-conditions>.

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MUCH OBLIGED!

The editor discovers a new bullpup, and more reasons to get excited



So stable on aim - as you'll find out when you shoot one.

This month's Editor's Test subject has that pleasingly high degree of balance and stability, and I think it looks good, too. Not a bad start, then, for the Jkhan Noblesse B – pronounced 'No-bless', rather than 'Noble-Ess', and the 'B' stands for 'bullpup'. Here we have a walnut-stocked, sidelever, 10-shot, pre-charged pneumatic sporter, that weighs just 6lbs (2.7kilos),

unscoped, is only 31.5 inches (800mm) long, yet produces a fine 170 shots at 11 ft.lbs.-plus in .22, and at least 150 in .177, from a 200 bar charge. Good stats, those, especially if you like your sporters compact, on the lighter side of handy, and with all of the performance you'll ever need at the legal limit, but things get even better.

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

The barrel of the Noblesse is 440mm long and fully shrouded. There's even, I'm told, an air-stripping cone inside the shroud, rather than any hair-curling products. This set-up provides efficient blast-muffling qualities, and for almost complete sound-strangulation there's a ½-inch UNF thread at the muzzle should you

wish to fit a extra silencer.

The trigger is a two-stage adjustable model, and the stock has to be removed to carry out any tweaking. I rarely adjust the triggers of test rifles, because I prefer to use them as most of their buyers will, with the trigger set as it came from the factory. I've done this ever since we carried out a survey on trigger adjustment some years ago. We asked those who wrote to us, and those who came to see us at game fairs and shows, if they adjusted their adjustable triggers. You'll be as shocked as I was to hear that less than 25% of those we asked ever altered their triggers' settings.

Yes, I struggled with that one, too, but since I've stopped automatically adjusting every rifle that rocks up at Airgun World Towers, I have to say that the groups I shoot haven't noticed a bit. If I'm testing a competition rifle with a go-anywhere, full-on, mega-trigger, then I'll spend hours exploring it, but if it's a sporter and the trigger feels 'OK', then I just get on and shoot it as, it seems, do most of you.

WORTH A FETTER

Anyway, now I've said all that, I'll do a complete 360 on it and recommend that you do, indeed, drop the stock off the Noblesse B and get tweaking its trigger. After backing off the two captive hex-bolts on the underside of the stock, you simply separate walnut from alloy and steel, placing the stock carefully out of harm's way. You'll notice the robust flat plate linkage connecting the trigger blade to its mechanism, and how it circumnavigates the rifle's on-board pressure gauge. That gauge is another excellent feature, because it's out of the way in that stock cut-out, and you don't need to look anywhere near the muzzle of the rifle to check your air reserves. Full marks on that one, Jkhan.



Trigger adjustment – length of first stage and pull-weight – comes courtesy of a couple of hex-headed grub screws, and careful juggling of these adjusters will produce a let-off of below the 2.6lbs factory setting. Personally, I'm more interested in the nature of the let-off than its weight, and I tweaked until the trigger released every shot cleanly and with no trace of 'drag' on the second stage. My trigger-pull gauge showed this to take place at 2.1lbs, so not that much different from the factory setting. If I owned one of these, and there's a distinct possibility of that, I'll be having the trigger professionally fettled for maximum smoothness, because even at this early stage of our relationship, I can tell that the Noblesse B is entirely worth such an investment.

TAKE IT TO THE BRIDGE

Have a lingering look at that bridge mount, with its neat ventilation and chunky styling. It's reassuringly solid, offers unlimited scope-positioning options on its Picatinny rail, and it's double-bolted to the action block, not attached to the air

reservoir or the stock in any way. This isolation from the reservoir and woodwork is important, because both can shift slightly during use and any such movement could take the scope with it. With the mounting platform effectively 'floating', all zero-shift concerns drift away. It's obvious that great thought has been invested in this rifle, and that shows in plenty of other areas, too, not least its magazine system.

THE MAGAZINE

If there's a more reassuringly solid, 'clunk-like-a-posh-car-door'

decades of happy functioning, and replacements/spares cost just £40 a throw, although throwing isn't recommended, obviously.

Check out the neat little pellet-retaining spring that encircles the magazine drum. I'm not sure why, but I like that more than the ubiquitous 'O' ring; it seems more 'engineering', that's all. I'm sure our better informed readers will now

rifle has been fired, so the Noblesse B can't be double-loaded.

THE WOODWORK

First, the oiled walnut stock of the Nobless B is neat, pretty and functional, if a tad angular in places. The chequering is, presumably, laser cut and as sharp as it is fine. Being slightly gorillaesque, I'd prefer a more extended fore end, although standard issue humans will find

'Noblesse oblige' Literally means, 'nobility obliges'. It's generally used to imply that with wealth, power, and prestige comes social responsibility.

type of multi-shot pellet magazine than this one, I've yet to see it; this device really does appear to be built to last a lifetime, and it's a genuinely pleasing thing to use, too. Made from solid alloy and steel, held perfectly in place by a sprung ball detent, it can be cleaned and lightly lubed for

write in their droves to tell me that an 'O' ring is superior in every aspect, but until my fond notions are dashed, I'll enjoy that little spring, thanks.

Loading pellets is a simple matter of pushing them into their respective slots - where they're held snugly by that splendid spring we so admired mere moments ago - and manually turning the drum until all vacancies are filled. Then, with the pellets pointing the right way, the magazine cassette can be inserted in its breech-block cut-out until it locates with its detent. This internally-sprung mag' can be removed and inserted from left or right, and it only indexes after the

everything hand-filling and secure on contact.

I'll suggest a few upgrades if I may, and the first trots along in the form of my hard-ridden hobby-horse - an adjustable butt pad. That would be a definite retro-fit for me. Another improvement would be the removal of a little of the timber above the trigger guard to allow easier access for my trigger finger. I'm sure that would be the work of moments for anyone with woodworking smarts, which doesn't include me, but I know some talented folk, so that's no big deal.

My final enhancement would be a subtle palm shelf at the base of the pistol grip, so I could 'rest' my

»



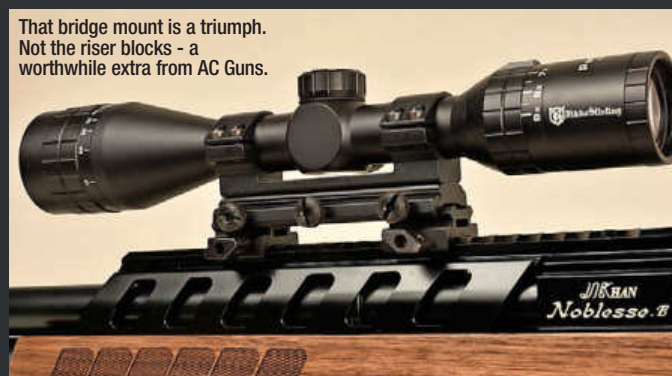
Smooth and efficient - and does all it should do.



The excellent 10-shot magazine slots in from either side.



I'd skim off a little timber to give my trigger finger more room.



That bridge mount is a triumph. Not the riser blocks - a worthwhile extra from AC Guns.

EDITOR'S TEST: NOBLESSE B

One of the most pleasing rifles of its kind.



hand, rather than actually grip the grip, so to speak. These three are more due to my own preference and peculiarities than anything else, so again, you normals out there could well achieve all sorts of wonderful things without them.

ON THE RANGE

Charging the Noblesse means plugging in your air hose to the air-inlet port and squirting in 200 bar's worth of compression. Then, bleed the hose, unplug the charging probe and rotate the port cover to keep out all pollution. Now you're ready to go, once you've loaded that solid lump of multi-shot

magazine, of course.

You'll find the discreet sidelever easy to flick open and close, and that mag' will click about its delivery in a most positive fashion. It's now, as your first 10 pellets are launched, that you'll discover if your trigger tweaking has been all that it should.

Over the chrono, the .177 test example gave me the first 50 shots – after three 'clearing' shots – at a steady 11.4ft.lbs., and I do mean 'steady'. For an

remarkable, with an

average variation of just 9 f.p.s. over those 50 shots, using Air Arms Field pellets straight from the tin. I found this so impressive that I repeated the test and, when the result was also repeated, I phoned Ray West of AC Guns, who import the Noblesse B, to demand an explanation.

Ray revealed sod-all by way of internal secrets, but he did concede that 'everything in that main valve is perfectly balanced'. He added, 'the internal components are extremely well

"Everything in that main valve is perfectly balanced"

unregulated PCP, in that it doesn't carry a separate regulation device, this .177 Noblesse B is verging on

finished, too', and it's always a great indicator when care is taken over the unseen parts of any piece of machinery.

ACCURACY

As soon as I had the Noblesse zeroed, those previously mentioned Air Arms Diabolo Field pellets were observed through the scope, clustering shoulder-to-shoulder right out to 45 yards. I pushed it to 50 yards, blustery wind permitting, and got one freak of a group just 17mm in diameter, with the average coming in at a hair each side of 20mm when things fell really still.

HANDLING

It's a bullpup, so it brings everything that comes with that format; incredible stability on aim, particularly in the standing and kneeling positions, plus the ability to lock it on to a target in no time. I'll be experimenting with some riser blocks to get the scope/eye alignment pinpoint perfect, plus I'll ask the AC Guns boffins about the

possibility of making some spacers to fine-tune the height of the cheek piece. Exciting stuff ahead, no?

VERDICT

I'm excited, as I've already said. I've just been told that there's a version of this rifle that has a rubberised timber stock, and which at £799, comes in a hundred quid cheaper than the test gun's £899. This sounds so promising that I've sorted one for a feature I'm currently putting together on night vision. As things stand, I reckon Ray Hales and his team at AC Guns have found something extremely special with the Jkhan Noblesse B. There's a standard format Noblesse, too, so the excitement builds still further. Tune in next month to see if this Noblesse obliges me to add it to my armoury. ■

Not a bad looker at all, is it?



Ooh look, it's a bit like a pellet!



The gauge is nicely tucked away.

TECH SPEC

Model: Noblesse B

Manufacturer: Jkhan

Country of origin: Korea

Price: £899. Black-stocked version, £799

Type: Pre-charged, multi-shot bullpup sporter

Calibre: .22, .177

Cocking: Sidelever

Loading: Via removable, rotary 10-shot magazine

Trigger: 2-stage, adjustable

Stock type: Ambidextrous, thumbhole walnut

Weight: 3.8kg (7lbs 7oz), scoped as shown

Length: 800mm (31.5ins)

Barrel: 400mm (15.75ins)

Fill pressure: 200 bar

Shots per charge: 170 in .22, 150 in .177

Variation over 50 shots: 9fps for .177 on test

Average energy: 11.4 ft.lbs.

Contact: AC Guns on 01424 752 261

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HW100T QF	.177 / .22	410mm	3.8kg
HW100KS QF	.177 / .22	310mm	3.4kg
HW100S QF	.177 / .22	410mm	3.8kg

Steve Newton shares the wisdom of 45 years in the field

I have spent my entire life in the countryside, and since the age of seven years old I have dedicated my life to the pursuit of field sports. I have hunted, fished, and shot just about every quarry species in the British Isles, and beyond. I have raised a family and earned my living from being a gamekeeper, falconer and professional pest controller, using all the methods, both new and ancient, in my pursuit of quarry - including the use of other hunting animals such as ferrets, hawks and dogs, both during the daylight hours and at night. Over the next two articles, I

am going to talk about some of the most important lessons I learned through over 45 years of hunting and shooting, and hope that you might be able to glean a few scraps of information to help you in your chosen sport.

YOU ARE NEVER ALONE!

Safety is the most important lesson that should always be learned first; the countryside is a popular place so no matter how far from civilization you think you are, there could always be someone just over that rise, or behind that hedge, so even in the most remote areas,

never let your safety consciousness slip, be absolutely sure of your backdrop and never be tempted to take that dodgy shot at the rabbit just on the brow of that hill, even if it's the only one you've seen all day. Remember, you may know where all the footpaths are, but that doesn't mean everyone else does. Get safety firmly and permanently secured in your head because that one microsecond of wrong decision can never be taken back.

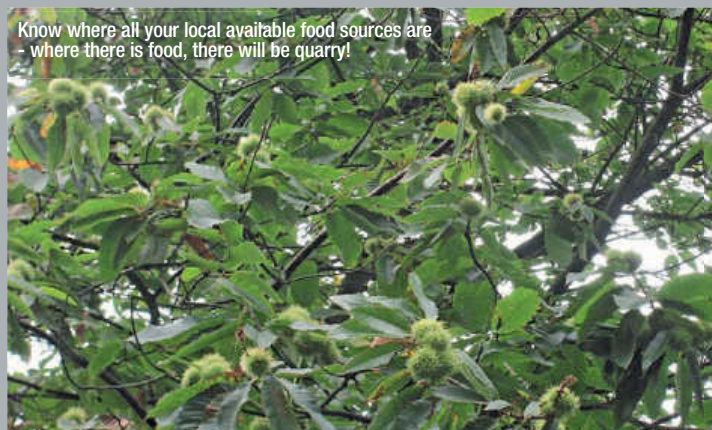
PATIENCE

I grew up in a small village in Hertfordshire and by the time I was eight years old I had two ferrets, a hawk and a lurcher. We had no deep freeze back then, so all the food for my charges had to be procured fresh each morning before setting off for the village

school, and each evening when I returned home. At that age, even in a quiet country village, there was a limit to the weapon with which I could freely roam the fields, in order to achieve my daily quotas of wild food, and like many young country lads, that weapon was the humble, but very deadly, homemade catapult! Every wild creature that drew breath back then was on the menu as far as I was concerned, and with a limited range of around 10-15 yards - remember these were not the high-power catapults that can be purchased nowadays - one of the first lessons I ever learned was patience! I am not a naturally patient man, but I soon realised that without that necessary trait I was doomed to failure. It doesn't matter which weapon you have, how good your ammo is, or how abundant your quarry may be, you »

LESSONS

Know where all your local available food sources are - where there is food, there will be quarry!



LEARNED

The pigeons will hammer grain crops at the right time of year.



Practice is vital. You cannot do enough.



"Every single scrap of information you can glean about your quarry can be used to good effect"

will not achieve consistent success without patience and clarity of mind. Patience is at the core of all you will need in order to be an effective hunter - and the core of each and every lesson I have learned!

KNOW YOUR QUARRY

Time spent in observation is never wasted. Every single scrap of information you can glean about your quarry can be used to good effect - not just today, but for many years to come. There is only so much information that the Internet can give you, and the only way to get a feel for your quarry is to be out there, watching and learning. You don't always have to be carrying a rifle in order to further your hunting experience; sitting quietly in an area that you know your quarry inhabits, and just watching from an unseen position will reveal more than a thousand web pages ever could.

Perhaps getting out on your permission is not always convenient, but wildlife is around you at all times. Watching out of the office window, or standing at a

bus stop will reveal several of your intended quarry species going about their daily routine, and this observation will reveal many secrets that you can store away in your brain for later use, to hunt the species more effectively. Knowing your quarry's habits will allow you to think like the animal and predict where and when you will have the best chance of success on any given day, depending on the food source favoured at any time of year, time of day, or current weather conditions. Learn the signs of your quarry; its droppings, fur, tracks, and the sounds it makes under which circumstances - this is how you learn the vital skills of fieldcraft. This can only be learned through personal experience, but it's a lesson that never stops because every day there is always something new to learn.

PRACTICE IS THE KEY

No one ever got better at anything by sitting on their ass, and nobody is good enough never to need practice; even with all the years I have behind me I still practise regularly, and those who shoot less

frequently need to practise even more. This is a pretty obvious statement, but what's not generally understood is that the type and quality of the practice makes all the difference. Time after time, I come across people who consider themselves to be capable shots because, at home or on the range, they can consistently hit the target from a rest. The problem is that, in a hunting situation, this kind of practising is virtually worthless, so when they are asked to take a kneeling shot at a target 35 yards away, in a right to left breeze, up an incline, they fail miserably.

The kind of stationary practising

necessary for a target shot is not what is required for hunting in the field. Your targets could be anything from 10-40 yards, and you will probably have only one chance from a kneeling or standing stance, in high winds and drizzling rain, perhaps after an arduous stalk, so I can't for the life of me think why spending hours shooting at the same target at the same range, from a rest, can possibly be of any use whatsoever. You must learn to shoot from standing and kneeling positions, and unusual ones as well, because there will be times when you need to lean around

A lifetime of hunting and shooting has taught me many lessons.

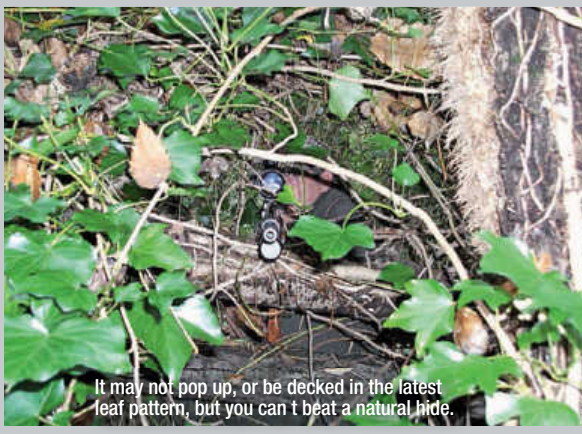


Training and working with a good hunting companion makes every trip enjoyable.



Quiet and unobtrusive observation is the key to understanding your quarry's behaviour and habits.





It may not pop up, or be decked in the latest leaf pattern, but you can't beat a natural hide.

Looks pretty empty, but you never know where someone may be, so always be 100% confident of your backstop.



"I am not a naturally patient man, but I soon realised that without that necessary trait I was doomed to failure"

Patience has never been one of my strong points, but when it comes to hunting, it's a necessity.



their never-ending quest to put more game in the bag. Powerful micro-lamps and batteries; digital night devices, rangefinders, stupidly overcomplicated reticles, electronic calls, any number of new cammo patterns, pop-up hides, and the very sophisticated design and technology that now goes into many airguns, are just a few of the new innovations designed to snare the beginner and inexperienced, but all this recent technology is a two-sided sword. Unfortunately, the very nature of human beings is always to find a way that takes less effort, less skill, less knowledge, to achieve the same results that otherwise would



Learn to look for signs of your quarry; scrapes and fur are a good indication that rabbits are present.

trees, and so on. Your training needs to reflect this, so move out of your comfort zone and get inventive with a few knockdown targets before each hunting session.

NO SUBSTITUTE FOR SKILL

I have witnessed the popularity of hunting rise over the years and, as a consequence, I have also witnessed the complex technology being developed to aid hunters in

have taken years of fieldcraft and dedication to achieve, and of course manufacturers have taken full advantage of this. The result is that these very innovations are all about not having to go out there and learn the proper and very necessary skills already outlined above. Don't get me wrong, I also take full advantage of some of this technology; certainly, I would not be without my digital night vision, but it's still very important to get out and learn that core base of knowledge and skills necessary for consistent success, and there will never be a gadget to replace this. Try to use technology to enhance your skills, not substitute them, and remember, your skills will still be there and stand you in good stead long after your latest gimmick has stopped working, or has been relegated to the back of the gun cabinet when you finally realise it's a pile of crap.

That's it for this month. Next month, we will continue with the series, but for now have a great Christmas and, as always, shoot safely! ■

At the end of the stalk you may only have one chance. Success or failure will be decided by how much you have practised



"In my opinion, most of this stuff is overhyped rubbish designed to snare the beginner and inexperienced"

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Humberside Shooting Ground	Driffield	01964 544357
Ibstock Tackle & Guns	Leicester	01530 260901
Keens Tackle & Guns	Mid Glamorgan	01656 720807
Kibworth Shooting Ground	Leicester	0116 279 6001
Lamberts of Ringwood	Ringwood	01425 473223
Litts @ Sportsman Gun Centre	Newport	01633 843252
Livelines Tackle & Guns	Armadale	01501 733 150
McAvoy's	Standish	01257 426129
Mooredges Airguns	Doncaster	01405 741706
North West Gun Centre	Bolton	01204 496008
Northwales Gun Centre	Deeside	01244 812219
Pax Guns	Highgate	0208 340 3039
R&K Stockcraft	Milton Keynes	01908 561298
Redbeck Shooting Supplies	Wakefield	01924 862037
Ronnie Sunshine's	Berkhamsted	01442 872829
S.D.S Watersports	Sheffield	0114 248 8688
Sandwell Fieldsports	West Bromwich	0121 5202000
Shooting Supplies	Bromsgrove	01527 831261
Skipton Gun Room	Skipton	01756 792630
Solware	Tamworth	0844 357 0306
Sportsman Gun Centre	Exeter	01392 354854
Swillington Shooting Supplies	Swillington	01132 875685
T&JJ McAvoy's	Wigan	01257 426129
TAL Arms	Dorset	01202 473030
Tannyoki Guns	Newry	02838 318308
The Countryway Gunshop	West Malling	01732 870023
Valley Arms	Bangor	01824 704438
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PRE-CHARGED PNEUMATIC

NEW

In part two **Phill Price** brings us his conclusion on **SMK's new PCP**

MATIC

In its natural environment the M22 looked right at home.

Last month, I had a short time to have a look at SMK's new pre-charged pneumatic (PCP), the M22, so this is part two; my conclusion and feelings about the rifle. In keeping with SMK's usual style, this gun offers good value at just under £400, which means that it's head-to-head against some serious, multi-shot PCP competition, such as the Gamo Coyote, Hatsan AT44 and the Walther Rotex RM8, all guns with a proven track records from

prestigious brands. The metalwork is right up there with them all, but the stock looks a little basic in that company, even though it works

"I guess it was inevitable that SMK would enter the PCP market and their first offering is a strong one"

perfectly well. I was very pleased to see that steel sling swivels are fitted as standard, something I'd like to see on all rifles. Anybody

who tells you that they're not needed, clearly doesn't spend much time in the real world, carrying a gun. Tired, aching arms

are no aid to accuracy, so bearing the gun's weight on your shoulder makes absolute sense.

Looks are one thing but what

really counts for the dedicated airgun hunter is performance, and the power and consistency of the M22 is spot-on for that job. The .22 on test was launching the Remington Thunder Field Target Trophy pellets (14.8 grains) supplied at an average muzzle velocity of 584 fps, which calculates out to 11.2ft.lbs., plenty to deal with any legitimate airgun quarry. Shot-to-shot variation was 16 fps over 60 shots, which is just fine for a sporting rifle.

The deep grooves in the fore end give excellent grip.



TECH SPEC

Manufacturer SMK

Web www.sportsmk.co.uk

Tel 01206 795333

Type Pre-charged pneumatic

Action Magazine-fed, bolt action

Length 1140mm (44 3/4")

Weight 3.5kg (7.7lbs)

Fill pressure 200bar

Trigger Two-stage adjustable

Stock Ambidextrous beech sporter

Calibres .177 and .22

£399.95

I proved this rifle in the field despite limited time.



The magazine is simple and robust.



ACCURACY IS EVERYTHING

The most important quality that any serious airgun needs most, though, is accuracy, so it was time to get the targets out and shoot some groups. A key advantage that a PCP has over any spring/piston gun is that it is recoilless, making it far easier to shoot. However, it will still need a good trigger and an accurate barrel to succeed. The reach to the M22 trigger is quite long for my average size, but the first stage is also long, so by the time you feel the second stage, the reach is just right. The metal trigger blade has quite square edges and uses a through-button style safety as you see on Air Arms guns. Although this is rather crude, it works and can be felt whilst on aim to let you know if it's on or off.

As I mentioned last time, the magazine is simple and quick to load and was totally reliable during my test with a variety of pellets. To see which suited the M22 best I tried the Remington as described above; Air Arms Field Diablo,

Crosman Premier, RWS Superdome and, one of my old favourites, H&N Field Target. My test gun showed a clear and immediate preference for the Superdomes and H&N FT, the latter proving to be the most accurate overall. At 16.3 grains it's quite heavy so produced quite a curved trajectory, but landed with a clout. It's an interesting design being a round nose with a shoulder that surrounds the head. This seems to aid energy transfer and I've found them good killers on rats in the past.

At 25 yards I got several 1/4" groups which opened out towards 1/2" in the wind, but it was clear that this rifle has the accuracy to

be a successful hunter at all sensible ranges. With that confidence in my pocket, I was itching to take the rifle hunting, but with time being short as ever, I took a precious moment that was offered. While Terry and I were taking the photographs on a friend's land, we noticed that the squirrels were busy preparing for winter on that beautiful October morning, and as we were shooting photos we had our ears open for the sounds of claws on bark as the tree rats made their way through the higher branches. Not being fully familiar with this rifle's trajectory, though, I wanted a shot no longer than 30 yards, so I was going to have to be patient.

THERE'S ONE!

Just as we got back to the car I was looking around with the new SIG binoculars (see page 92) when I saw a squirrel digging furiously in a grassy clearing. I grabbed the rifle and filled the magazine, and planned a route - behind a shed, then behind a log pile, and finally slithering up to an inverted boat that had been pulled ashore. As I peeped over the bow, the squirrel was still hard at work burying nuts, having no idea it was being watched. Slipping the safety off, I found the squirrel's busy head hard to get a bead on, so I resorted to a quiet squeak from my pursed lips to gain its attention. As it finally became still, the heavy .22 found its mark and my supper was in the bag.

I guess it was inevitable that SMK would enter the PCP market, and their first offering is a strong one. The price is good, the engineering and metal finish right up there, so all that remains to be seen is its durability in the field. As first attempts go, I say, well done! ■

A very substantial bolt and shaft has a durable feel.



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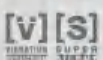
- ▶ Target rifle for precision shooting
- ▶ 10m accuracy
- ▶ Easy to cock springer
- ▶ Polymer barrel sleeve protects from sweat and increases grip
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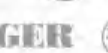
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Any cover, no matter how sparse, is worth exploiting.

TOP TIP!

Always give the wind test to use against you by not smothering yourself in after-shave and pungent deodorant before you go hunting. A bit of scent-free underarm roll-on will stop you smelling like a polecat in the field, but the latest designer pongs are definitely out, OK?



Do NOT use after-shave or scented deodorants before going hunting!

"The wind has two major roles in my sporting life"

THE ENDLESS SUBJECT

Our airgun student takes another giant step along the road toward his shooting graduation

I already know that learning to shoot will be a never-ending lesson and that I'll still be learning no matter how long I study this wonderful sport. That's just a fact of our shooting lives, and it's something we'll all have to accept, and try to learn as much as we can along the way. I've also realised that, within the sport, there are some subjects that

cannot be fully learned, and I'm going to try to deal with one of those this month.

WIND - KNOWLEDGE AND EFFECT

Like many of you, I've been reading Tim Finley's brilliant series on predicting the effect of wind on pellets and how to compensate for that. Tim has won hundreds of

trophies at every level in competition and he's made a forensic study of the effect of wind on his shooting, because shooters like Tim have an incredible desire to win and to control what's in front of them during the course of every competition.

That's the thing about the wind, though - it just cannot be controlled, like pellet quality or

shooting technique, or any of the 'mechanical' influences on our shooting. We can't control the wind, it's the most variable of the factors that control our success in the field, but we can do plenty of things to understand its effect and to work with it, rather than against it, and against ourselves. Yes, another of my many major discoveries is that we can learn to know the wind and by so doing, get on better terms with it.

WIND AS OUR FRIEND

I want to become an efficient hunter, so the wind has two major roles in my sporting life. First, it will move my pellets, and sometimes me, around, and that's something I'll be dedicating the rest of my life to working out. Second, the wind will carry my scent, and some of the noise I make, in the field. Whether that scent and noise is carried toward or away from my quarry, is entirely up to me, save for the occasional sneaky change in wind direction. So, even within this never-ending subject, there's an element of it



Moving low 'n' slow - ideally with the wind in your face.



I know where I need to get - but how do I get there?

"It's the old 'effort equals reward' thing"

that I can get some real control over, and all it takes is a little thought and planning. This month, I'll deal with using the wind to mask our approach to quarry, and next time out, I'll cover the ways I've found that help to either predict or reduce the effect wind has on my pellets.

FACE-FIRST FORWARD

You'll have read as many times as I have the simple instruction to 'keep the wind in your face as you head toward your quarry'. That's great advice, but it has one major flaw; it's usually impossible to do it. In the real world, as I've been finding out these past few months, the rabbits I'm trying to stalk rarely provide a nice, straight, convenient, downwind approach route between them and me.

Every time so far, I've checked the direction of the prevailing wind, or more usually 'breeze', and once I've set my face against it to work out my approach, there are all sorts of problems queuing up ahead. Sometimes the space

between me and the rabbit is flat, featureless, and without a sprig of natural cover, and at other times I can face an assault course of hedges, ditches, detours and obstacles designed to make a stalk impossible. The one controlling fact is, you're better off stalking twice the distance to keep the wind in your face, than risking the shorter, more convenient, option. It's the old 'effort equals reward' thing, that applies to all of our shooting.

PLAN THAT ROUTE

After so much trial and far too much error, I've got a system sorted that works really well for me now, and while I fully expect to be refining it for at least a couple of decades, it's a great basis for my stalking. Here's what I do:

1. From the moment I arrive at my shoot, I'm 'looking' for the direction of the prevailing wind. By 'prevailing' I mean the 'most regular' wind that blows across the land I'm on. This is vital because it

will dictate everything I do, so I study the trees and foliage in the distance and see how they're moving, and I watch any incoming birds, especially wood pigeons, because they prefer to land into the wind rather than with it. At this time of year, falling leaves are a great way of working out wind direction. Once I've decided where the wind is mainly coming from, I can decide on how I'll check out the known quarry hotspots whilst keeping my initial approach downwind of these.

2. Once I've spotted my quarry, the first thing I do is stop, hide, and work out my stalking route, always with the wind very much in my thoughts. Instead of plotting a route to the rabbit, I'll work out how I can best get to the nearest natural screen, say a bush, or fallen tree, or even a tussock of grass, anything that will mask my approach better than open ground. If there's no cover at all, then it's a case of an ultra-slo-mo' belly-crawl, or passing up the stalk – and I

never pass up a stalk, because I know I'll learn something even if I spook the rabbit.

3. Then, it's a matter of moving as low and as slowly as I can manage, gaining each concealing feature ahead, until I'm in range and ready to take the shot. My maximum range in the field, from a fully-rested, stance in calm conditions is 35 yards, provided I'm absolutely certain about the range. If I can't get that close, and preferably closer, I don't take the shot. Again, though, I'll always have a go at getting closer, because at this stage my shooting is about learning, and I know I'll learn so much each time I try.

FINAL NOTES

Look for the signs of wind at all times, and be aware that its direction can change. If that change is long-term, then change your approach plans with it. Above all, decide that you'll learn to know the wind as best you possibly can, because it can be a good friend, not just the ultimate foe. ■

R-10 MK2 regulated



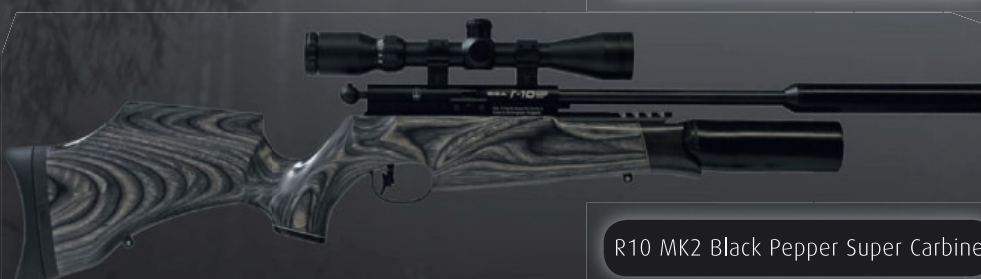
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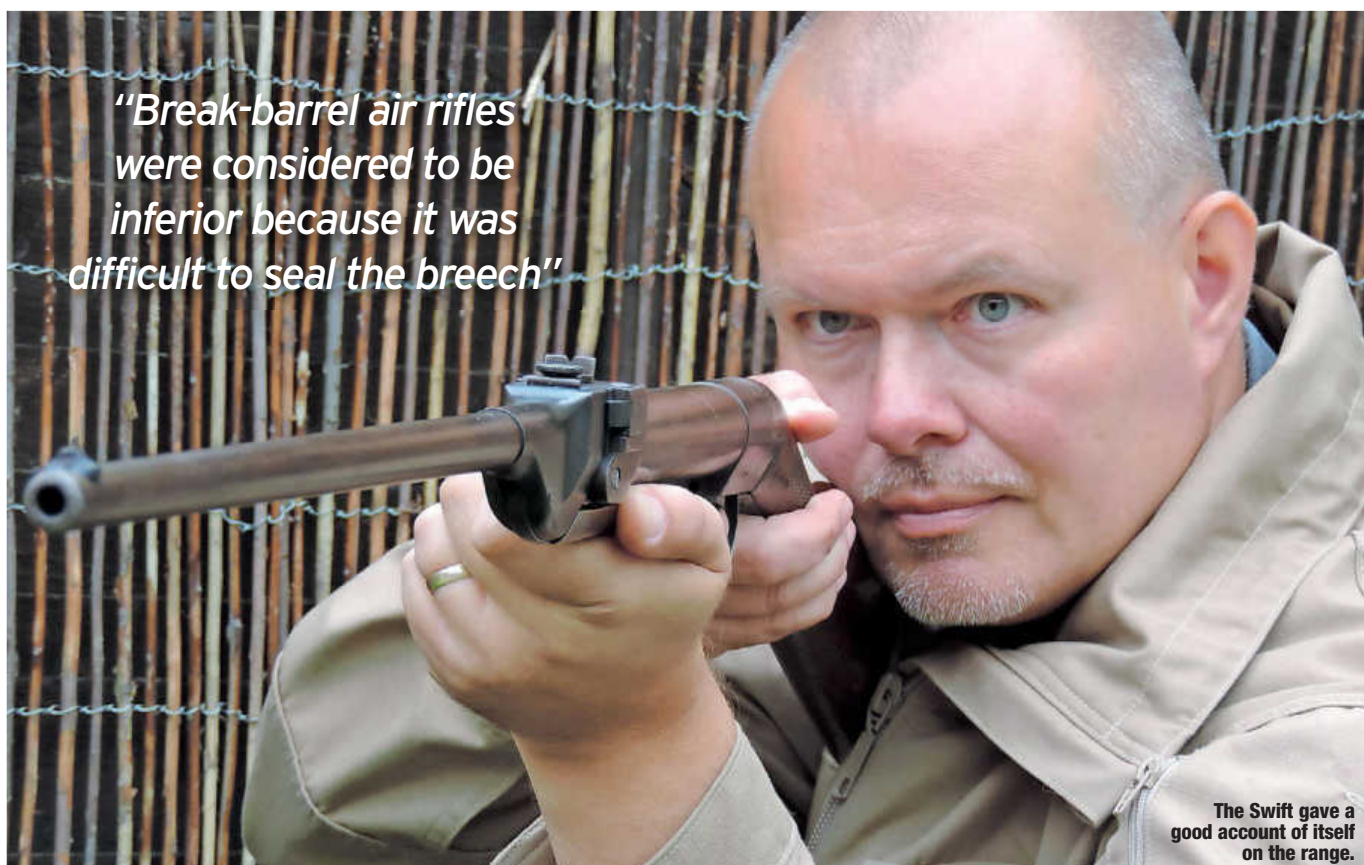
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"Break-barrel air rifles were considered to be inferior because it was difficult to seal the breech"

The Swift gave a good account of itself on the range.

KYNOCH SWIFT

In part one John Milewski reveals this little known gem

When collectors think of Kynoch, they tend to focus on the ammunition branded under this name. The company was established by Scotsman, George Kynoch, in 1862, when he acquired Pursall & Phillips of Whittall Street, in Birmingham. By 1882, the company's Lion Works had grown to such an extent that it had become the second-largest ammunition plant within Great Britain.

Further land was acquired at Witton in the late 1880s, and after the company obtained Limited status, George Kynoch resigned following disputes with the board of directors and died in self-imposed exile in South Africa in 1891. Kynoch remains a fascinating character to study, from his entrepreneurial skills to

a political career as a Member of Parliament.

Following Kynoch's departure, the company continued to prosper and were among the first manufacturers of the waisted airgun pellet, as we know it today. When BSA air rifles were first made in 1905, BSA handbooks recommended exclusive use of the .177 Kynoch Match slug, which was obtainable through BSA dealers at a cost of 1s 6d per 1000. Before long, Witton pellets were offered by Kynoch and were the predecessor of the legendary 'Wasp' pellets, later made by Eley.

Kynoch's one and only As well as airgun pellets, Kynoch also sold an air rifle under the

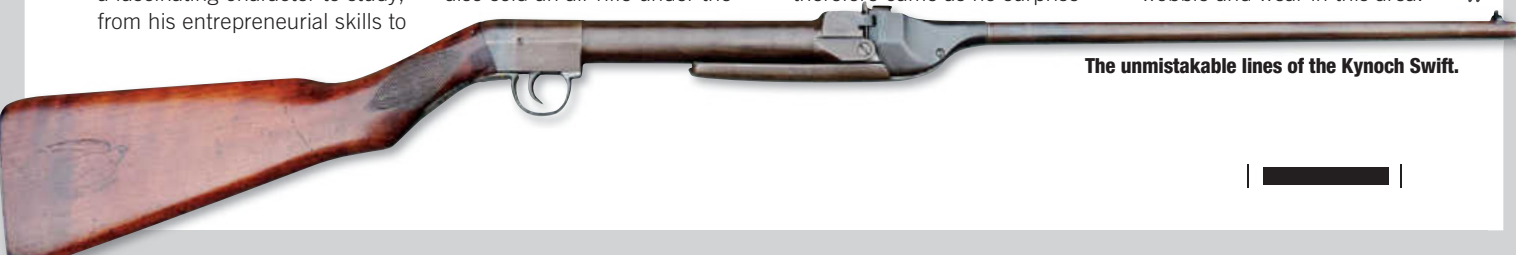
'Swift' name. As ammunition manufacturers, the rifle may not have been made at Kynoch's own factories, but was more likely made for them elsewhere. Quite where it was made remains a mystery, but we do know that the Swift was patented by George Hookham and Edward Jones. The patents were applied for in 1906, under patent numbers 11557 and 13716 respectively, and were both accepted in 1907.

The Kynoch Swift was reviewed in Arms And Explosives (AAE) - a trade journal - in January 1908, which acknowledged the success that the company's air rifle pellet had enjoyed since placed on the market some years previously. It therefore came as no surprise

then, that Kynoch introduced an air rifle to complement their range of waisted air rifle pellets. I will refer to the AAE review throughout this study of the Swift, and compare the journal's findings with my own, which are based on a surviving .25 calibre Swift, serial numbered 736.

Break-barrel paranoia Back in 1906, there was almost paranoia over break-barrel air rifles and their poorer breech lock-up, particularly when compared to the fixed-barrel Lincoln Jeffries/BSA, which had been introduced a year earlier. Break-barrel air rifles were considered to be inferior because it was difficult to seal the breech whilst preventing wobble and wear in this area.

»



The unmistakable lines of the Kynoch Swift.



Kynoch's Witton pellet was named after a factory's location and was the forerunner of the Eley Wasp. Image courtesy of Tim Dyson.

The Swift addressed breech sturdiness in two ways; firstly, the most apparent visible feature of the Swift is the substantial breech lock-up, which is covered by patent no 11557. The whole breech area looks massive, and two sprung breech jaws, one on each side, firmly lock the action shut when in the closed position. The engaging surfaces of the jaws and grooved breech surface are sloped, to allow their easy release when being cocked, and firm engagement when closed.

The second patented attempt (13716) to achieve an airtight joint was internal and can only be examined when the barrel is broken for cocking. The breech end of the barrel protrudes

tightness of the breech is secured by coning the entry to the barrel and providing on the face of the body a projecting brass disc with rings and other arrangements for securing an airtight joint". The review rifle is fitted with a leather washer in place of the coned brass disc and this serves well enough to seal the joint satisfactorily.

Over-engineered? The whole breech area looks over-engineered, and despite the sturdiness of the breech jaws, they are more prone to wear than a contemporary Britannia air rifle, for example, which uses a self-compensating breech and Webley-style stirrup catch. Breaking the barrel to cock the Swift is not difficult, and on No. 736, the cocking stroke became harder the more the rifle was compressed. With an 18¾in barrel, cocking the Swift is not overly difficult, either, and the rifle cocks when the stroke exceeds a little over 90 degrees.

A trigger-adjusting screw was originally fitted horizontally in front of the trigger block, but its head protruded to the extent that it fouled the cocking stroke. In fact, the clearance between the front of the

"It is believed that not many more than 1000 Swifts have been produced"

slightly from the breech and this protrusion engages with the leather breech seal located at the transfer port end of the breech. The two components mate together and a reasonably airtight joint is the result. As the AAE review pointed out, "the air

trigger block and the rear of the cocking lever is only around in, and it is difficult to see how a trigger adjuster can work adequately within such a small space.

It is believed that not many more than 1000 Swifts have been produced and the rifle is a desirable



The barrel is a screw-fit and is secured with a screw hidden in the recess in front of the cocking lever.



The serial number can be found on the rifle's trigger block.



The substantial trigger guard was fixed with five screws.

collector's item today. In the next issue, we shall take a detailed look at the Swift's other characteristics

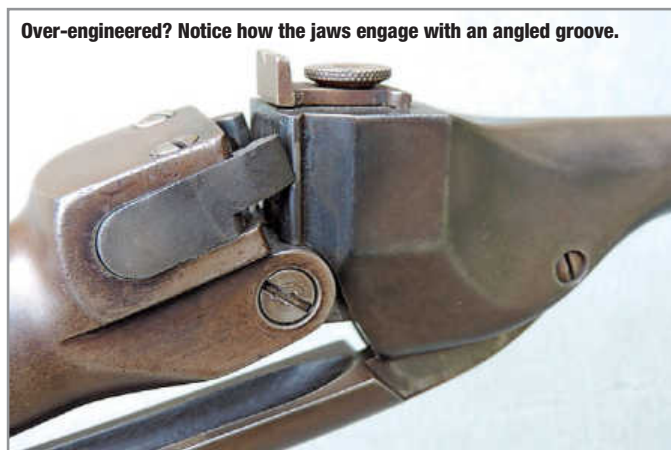
and move on to the test range in order to put No. 736 through its paces. ■



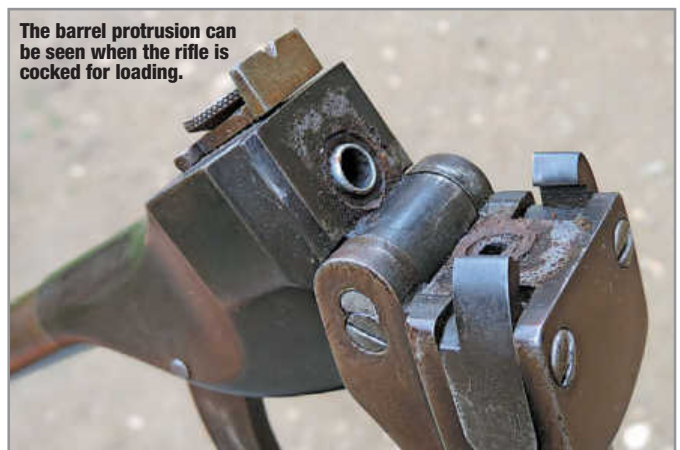
The inside of the cocking lever is also stamped with the rifle's number, and original parts should match.



The top of the cylinder is stamped KYNOC LIMITED PATENT.



Over-engineered? Notice how the jaws engage with an angled groove.



The barrel protrusion can be seen when the rifle is cocked for loading.

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- Metal Housing
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- Integral Weaver/Picatinny Optics Rail and Accessory Rail

- Tactical Foregrip
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Marked bends in barrels are visually apparent, especially if you turn the rifle on its side and look along the top of the cylinder.

ROUND THE BEND?

Jim investigates an unusual case involving an HW77 fitted with an aftermarket mainspring

People who use springers with open sights are very much in the minority these days, although where I live in Worcestershire there is a thriving bell target league - the Lord Ednam, which is the only airgun league to use open sights, rather than dioptre (or 'peep') sights, so open-sighted spring rifle shooters are not quite the minority they are elsewhere. When the HW77 was launched, it found immediate favour for bell target due to its low recoil, and today that and the TX200 - retrospectively fitted with open sights - seem the most popular rifles. The sport is shot over just six yards, so when I read a thread on an Internet forum in which the owner was unable to sight in a new HW77 at six yards, because it shot high, it was obvious that something was amiss, so I offered to take a look.

The rifle in question was new, but had been supplied fitted with an aftermarket spring, and suspicion fell on the spring as the

cause of the problem. Some aftermarket springs are stiffer and longer than the factory originals, so they drive the piston rather more quickly, increasing recoil velocity. In itself, that is not necessarily a problem, but coupled with auto-ignition, which is not uncommon in brand-new springers, it can lead to the pellet exiting the muzzle early in the surge stage of the recoil cycle, with the result that the rifle shoots a little higher than it might.

TESTING

The cocking effort was not high, which was a surprise, and the shot cycle felt right for an HW77, so I measured the recoil and plotted the pellet exit and again, everything seemed perfectly normal.

There's a box stuffed with rags in my workshop that I use to catch pellets when cycling them through an action, and it is around three yards from the muzzle. With the rear sight at its lowest setting, the

rifle was pretty well sighted in at three yards, which means that the pellet was climbing just under an inch to meet the sight line, so little wonder that it was shooting high at six yards.

When coming up against this sort of problem, it's always a good move to leave it and do something

else for a while, and the solution often pops into your head out of the blue. The owner of the rifle had never seen an HFT course, so we took a break from testing and drove to the Nomads grounds, where I and other members had been setting the course for the club's opening shoot the following day, and I introduced the rifle's owner to the members and explained the problem. Quick as a flash, my friend, Ian Sheppard,

"straightening a barrel, and which is most suitable will depend on the rifle"



Even a steel rule can reveal whether a barrel is bent up or down.

"use a straight edge to establish where the bend is, which is almost invariably right at the rear"



The splash plate of my lathe makes a good straight edge to check for cylinder/barrel alignment.

diagnosed a bent barrel.

WOOD AND TREES

Before I started measuring, and getting utterly absorbed in the physics of the springer shot cycle, my first thought would have been that the HW77's barrel was bent, and the old saying about not being able to see the wood for the trees would be entirely appropriate. The only test that's needed to check for a bent barrel is to lay a straight edge along the top of the cylinder so that it protrudes over the barrel and any bend is immediately apparent - thinking about it, even laying the rifle on its side and looking along the top of the cylinder would have been sufficient. A subsequent check revealed that the barrel was not bent, but I thought it would be worth taking a look at the options for those unfortunate enough to have an airgun with a bent barrel.

How barrels become bent
In the case of break-barrels, the most common cause of bent barrels is the rifle discharging while the barrel is broken (open), which causes the barrel to swing violently shut, its momentum

being enough to bend it uphill. With underlever rifles, it's the same process, but with the lever swinging violently into the foresight unit, sometimes fracturing it, and bending the barrel upward.

If you encounter a break-barrel with the barrel bent downward, that is normally the result of the rifle being fitted with a mainspring that's so close to being coil bound at full compression that a lot of force is needed to push the piston back far enough for the sears to engage.

Most break-barrels with open sights have the rear sight mounted on the breech block, so that no matter which way the barrel is bent, the sights are always pointing in the same direction, so a slight bend in the barrel is not necessarily a huge problem. The HW77 rear sight, though, is mounted on the cylinder scope grooves, so if the barrel is bent, the sights no longer point in the same direction, and you have got a problem. The same is true, of course, if the rifle is used with a scope, although there is enough adjustment in most scopes to accommodate a moderate upward



If you look down a barrel bore at a light source, you'll see concentric rings if it's not bent.

bend in the barrel, so whether the barrel needs straightening or not will depend on how badly it's bent.

REMEDY

A new HW77 barrel costs over £100, and both removing the old barrel and fitting the new one are specialist tasks beyond the average tinkerer, and not cheap to have done professionally. The alternative is to straighten the barrel which, even though it might not end up perfectly straight, nor perfectly in alignment with the cylinder, will be a lot closer to being straight and aligned, and can turn a scrap barrel into a useful one.

Straightening a break-barrel, is fairly easy, because you can remove it from the rifle and clamp the breech block in padded vice jaws, then use a steel tube over the barrel to give the necessary leverage. The beauty of using a steel tube as a lever is that you can position the end immediately to one side of the bend in the barrel, so you concentrate the force on the bent section. Straightening an underlever is not so simple, though.

First, use a straight edge to establish where the bend is, which is almost invariably right at the rear where the barrel enters the breech block. There is more than one way of straightening a barrel, and which is most suitable will depend on the rifle, and the positioning of the bend.

The best method is to support it each side of the bend whilst applying a force somewhere in between, depending on where the bend is, to bend the barrel back to where it should be. The supports can be hardwood Vee blocks, and the force would ideally be a manual screw press -which manufacturers use to straighten barrels - a large vice, or an hydraulic press; it could be your own weight or a blow from a cushioned mallet, and in the two latter instances, starting with a very low force, checking, and



increasing the force little by little until the barrel starts to bend. Using brute force and leverage sounds very crude, but it works.

If you have a robust vice firmly fixed to a sturdy bench, you could, in theory, straighten a fixed barrel by holding it in suitably padded

vice jaws and using the action as a lever, but I cannot recommend it, because it risks placing too much strain on the thin, threaded end of the outer cylinder.

If you have a barrel that is effectively scrap because it's bent, you have nothing to lose by

attempting to straighten it yourself. People who have straightened a few barrels get a 'feel' for it, and the more you do, the easier it becomes, but if you don't fancy tackling the job yourself, any competent gunsmith will be able to do the job for you ■



Here's a scrap barrel that I have deliberately placed a bend into, just so that I can straighten it.



The scrap barrel after a couple of minutes' straightening. It took longer to clean the surface rust than to straighten it!



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CAWS FOR CONCERN

Nigel Jones goes after a farmyard full of vermin

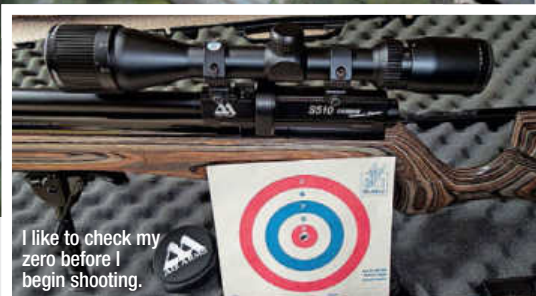
Now that winter is almost upon us, I will be spending most of my time either ratting or on farmyard forays, with the odd lamping session, of course. As you all know, I love spending time around the farmyards with my trusty Air Arms Ultimate Sporter. Its accuracy is second to none, in my opinion; no doubt all modern air-rifles would outshoot us, but there's something special about the Ultimate Sporter. Firstly, it's slightly on the heavy side, but perfectly balanced on aim, the

weight is spread perfectly throughout its length, and all this contributes to a perfectly straight shooter, in my eyes. I like having a bit of weight because it helps to keep the wobbles at bay for my standing shots, as opposed to having a lighter rifle.

Farmyard forays really get me going. They offer an array of

opportunities for the air-rifle hunter, and if you plan ahead, you won't go without a chance of a shot. Be sure to use every available cover that's on offer, but make sure it's OK with your farmer before making adjustments to the yard to favour your shooting. I would love one of

"In winter time, the farmyards and grain stores get attacked by corvids and pigeons"



natural food sources diminish out on the stubble or in the woodlands. Crows will feed on anything from road-kill to your old, chucked out food waste. They're known disease carriers because they pick up germs on their feet from sewage waste, or from landfill sites, and then they'll visit your backyard and spread disease to your household by landing on garden toys or furniture. It's not nice, but this situation often gets overlooked. As a licensed pest controller, I've had to learn about all pest species in detail.

Corvids are a big danger to our songbird population as well, because they raid the nests and take eggs and chicks. I've witnessed this many a time when I'm out in a hide; they will swoop from above and kill small birds, using their large, sharp beaks to pierce through the chest cavity of a blackbird. It's sad to witness, but it happens. This is one of the

those one-man, pop-up hides that have a comfortable fishing chair attached inside. Maybe I will pick one up one day - I could do with the mobile approach it offers around the yard or in the stubble fields when decoying; the possibilities are endless for your hunting tactics.

FINDING FOOD

In winter time, the farmyards and grain stores get attacked by corvids and pigeons as their



Topping the table with my corvid bait, consisting of maize and some rabbit innards.

"I decided to take the shot from this distance because waiting for corvids to present a better chance rarely happens"

reasons that I'm proud to be an air rifle hunter. Air rifles have many a good use and are safe to use around farmyards and outbuildings, as opposed to shotguns. Our country is full of hard-working conservationists who protect our wildlife and manage the countryside, and each and

every hunter who uses an air rifle safely and follows the code of conduct, is a massive part of this, for sure.

So this month's feature brings me to the farmyard to clear up some troublesome corvids that are causing a nuisance. The crows here are actually attacking the

farm, but to the right is a rented bungalow - only about 30 yards away. The occupants have stressed that the crows are all over their garden area in the mornings, so I had a plan straight away for this one. I decided to put a wooden bird feeder strapped to a post in the yard itself, then with a few visits for about a week prior to shooting, to bait the feeder with grain and maize - and some rabbit intestines, just to get their taste buds going.

AMBUSH

My ambush point was no more than 23 yards away from the feeder - I used my Bushnell range finding binoculars to find out. So with that done, all I had to do was put some of my Jack Pyke hide netting over an open window in the outbuilding where I planned to be on ambush for the session.

Over the next five days, I baited and logged down how things were going. On some visits, I merely sat in the car with my bins, watching

how the crows swooped and dive-bombed around the feeder, and there were jackdaws and pigeons present, too. This was all going to plan, for sure, and I couldn't wait to see how many I could bag, because all this looked promising. I planned an early visit for the Monday morning, but I would have to roll out of the sack at least an hour before daybreak to get into my farmyard hide before the corvids turned up.

Monday arrived. I got to the farm around 6am, checked and loaded my 10-shot magazines prior to settling into my ambush spot. My camouflage choice for the day was Jack Pyke's English Oak pattern, my preferred choice for winter, and I was also sporting my new gilet in the oak pattern. I like this because it keeps my body warm whilst offering full movement when shooting in confined spaces.

I quickly whipped on my head net and neoprene gloves and climbed into position 'Right then, crows - let's be having you' I thought. I'm always fired up when tackling avian quarry; they bring a testing challenge to the air rifle hunter, and I like to push the boundaries every time I'm out; after all, we don't improve without



A camo net over the window hid me perfectly.

I really like my new binoculars.





My new Jack Pyke neoprene gloves definitely keep my hands warm.



Rangefinding bin's are very useful for accurate shots

trial and error and learning from it. Even though I have been in this business 26 long years, I'm still as hungry as in the early days of my career.

DAWN BREAKS

The skyline was turning blue as the dawn was breaking, so it wouldn't be long before the crows got here, for sure. Crows are always hard at it; they're the last into roost and the first out of it, and they spend every minute of the day doing what they do best - being a menace and causing havoc from one place to another.

Twenty minutes passed as the sun rose slowly on the horizon, and my first chance of the morning presented itself. It was a jackdaw that perched straight on the bird-table feeder. I took aim carefully and cautiously, as I always do for the first of the session, because a miss at this stage knocks the old confidence a

bit. I then pressed through the two stages of the Ultimate's trigger, steadied my breathing and let fly my first Air Arms rocket of the morning. The shot connected superbly and I watched through my Bushnell scope, as the bird toppled off the feeder to the floor.

I was pleased with that shot and, as you probably noticed, I watched the shot through the scope as it happened. Follow-through is an important factor in shooting - without it you could break your shot, so try to maintain aim even after the shot has left your barrel. Do this and your shooting will improve, I assure you.

It wasn't long before another chance cropped up in the form of a collared dove. I'm here for pest control and these birds are a farmyard menace. Collared doves raid the grain stores of most farms and can be a major agricultural pest. I placed my Multi X cross

hair on its bonce and let off another pellet to its mark. The bird crashed to the ground and with a few last twitches of its wings, it was confirmed stone dead. As the morning went on I added a bonus woodpigeon to the bag and this will be definitely be welcomed for the dinner table.

I waited for at least 30 minutes until my next chance presented

jumped out to collect the bird, because I didn't want it to disturb any more incoming corvids.

Within the next hour, I added three more jackdaws because I had a bit of frenzy to contend with, but after that it settled down and I collected my fallen quarry. Then yet another large crow pitched onto the feeder - what a session I was having! I took aim, but this

"Follow-through is an important factor in shooting - without it you could break your shot"

itself. Quite a large crow landed on the barn roof some 35 yards away from my position, and I decided to take the shot from this distance because waiting for corvids to present a better chance rarely happens. I carefully moved slightly to the right to take aim, raising the cross hair just a smidgen to compensate for the extra five yards from my zero. I released the shot to its destination and it was a good one, for sure, because the crow slammed to the floor with just a few final twitches. I quickly

one was staring right at the hide net and offering me little chance of a clean shot to the head. Luckily, the it shifted its head just a tad, offering me a path to its brain through the side of its beak, towards its eye. I pressed through trigger and sent another pellet on its way. Thwack! Wow! What a beauty of a shot that was! The sound of the impact was loud on that one as the crow smashed to the ground stone dead.

Well I'm out of space yet again for this month, so safe hunting. ■



Another clean head shot from me and my Air Arms Ultimate Sporter.



Not a bad session, accounting for eight in the game bag.



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LARGIN' IT AT NIGHT!

In a double follow-up, the editor gives his verdict on the .25 calibre Hatsan and the Nightmaster Atom



So, what could we do with you then?

Well, what a splendid few weeks of discovery this has been and no mistake. New tricks coming at the old dog, left, right and usually centre, with much stored in my reference file for later use. So, a two-part follow-up, then, and with no space to lose, let's get into the first part, the Hatsan BT65 RB-W.



RANGE OF OPTIONS?

First, this rifle, when fed the correct diet of .25 calibre pellets, will shoot as straight as anything else out to 40 yards, because it's a well-made, pre-charged pneumatic that comes with a consistent powerplant, a reliable two-stage trigger, and a high-quality barrel as standard. It also comes with an excellent adjustable stock, where the cheekpiece and butt pad can be altered to fit the shooter, and that's a big deal,



Whether it's real vermin, targetised versions, or just plain targets, the big Hatsan can deliver seriously impressive performance.

especially when head position is so vital, as when using 'add on' night-vision gear like the Atom.

The restricting factor of this rifle, or more particularly its calibre at sub-12 ft.lbs. energies, is usable range. I found 25 yards to be my limit, although I must add that I didn't ever feel the need to extend that range during the field trials I undertook. I used the .25 Hatsan against feral pigeon out to 20 yards and rats at 15 yards or so, and at these ranges the main



advantage of the bigger calibre was obvious to me. This rifle absolutely hammers rats, and drops ferals with a pleasingly clinical regularity, as the entire 11.6 ft.lbs. of muzzle energy is used to the very best effect.

POSSIBLE CONVERT

I'm a .177 shooter of many years standing, but I've always used .22 for specific short range rat and feral work, because I won't have a problem with pellet drop-off at longer ranges, and I'm happy with the harder 'hit' and superior energy-transfer of the larger calibre. Well, I'm now able to conclude that a properly placed .25 does an even better job than a .22, when it comes to shutting down vermin like rats and feral pigeons.

I still take both types of quarry with head shots, but the 'switch-off' is slightly more immediate, even on rats, whose nervous reaction to being shot can result in occasional protracted bouts of twitching. There's noticeably less of this with a .25. Let's leave the grisly mechanics there, shall we, save to say that I'll be conducting more research into the short-to-medium range use of .25, with a view to

SPECIFICATIONS

Model: BT65 RB-W
Manufacturer: Hatsan
Country of origin: Turkey
Price: £550
Type: Pre-charged, multi-shot sporter
Calibre: .22, .177, .25 on test
Cocking: Bolt-action
Loading: Via removable, rotary 9-shot magazine
Trigger: 2-stage, adjustable
Stock type: Ambidextrous, adjustable, walnut
Weight: 4.6kg (9.7lbs), scoped as shown
Length: 1080mm (42.5 ins)
Barrel: 585mm (23ins)
Fill pressure: 200 bar
Shots per charge: 80 in .25
Variation over 80 shots: 19 fps for .25 on test
Average energy: 11.6 ft.lbs.
Contact: Edgar Brothers on 01625 613 177

RRP £550

possible conversion, who knows?

NOT A GENERAL SPORTER

One thing I'm sure of, is that a .25 calibre, legal limit sporter will not replace the .177 as my general sporting air rifle of choice. The pellet-drop and subsequent requirement for absolutely perfect range prediction takes that option away from me in the real world of hunting where every shot must count. At high power, though; now we're talking about a different animal entirely.

Having shot a few 40 ft.lbs., .25 calibre rifles, I can say beyond doubt that this makes a superb hunting rifle, and I'll definitely be exploring that option, too.

VERDICT

As a rat and feral rifle, the Hatsan BT65 RB-W in .25 calibre is a genuinely effective rifle, and I'd have full faith in it to extend its effectiveness in either FAC form, or in its .22 or .177 calibre, legal limit versions. That stock helps you maximise the potential of the high-performance Hatsan action. This rifle is reliable, consistent, superbly accurate, and affordable. It's a full-sized, hefty, sporter, especially with an add-on night sight and silencer fitted, but now that I know what it can do, I'd have no hesitation in recommending you to add it to your shortlist. Try one – you could be as impressed as I am.

THE NIGHT MASTER ATOM AND THE NIGHT MASTER 800-IR IC

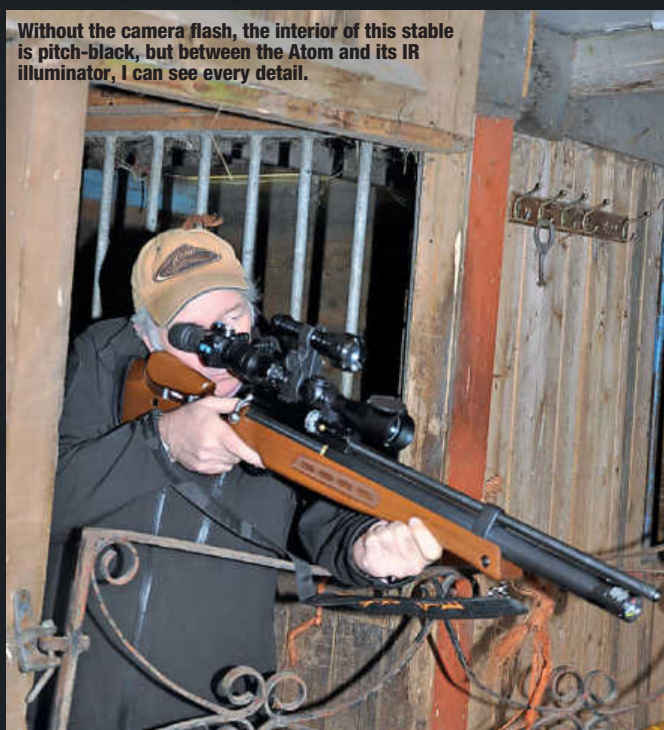
This Atom night sight and its 800-IR IC infra-red illuminator companion really are what's come to be known as 'an item'. That means they go well together and can be viewed as a viable



Do your pellet-selection homework – this is vitally important.

"I can identify targets perfectly out to 100 yards, and pick up eye-shine at around twice that range"

Without the camera flash, the interior of this stable is pitch-black, but between the Atom and its IR illuminator, I can see every detail.



partnership, and they certainly can. The variable-intensity 800 IR IC really does provide the perfect conditions to let the Atom shine

like the star it undoubtedly is.

EASY TO USE

The first great advantage of the Atom is its ease of use, followed closely by its compact size and low weight, all wrapped up in the unit's tremendous performance. You don't have to don't take my word for it, either, because Phil Hardman will be giving a full report on the Atom he's been using far more than I've been able to during the past few weeks.

During my time with the Atom and its IR illuminator partner, I've found both to be robust, reliable

and extremely effective, and I particularly appreciated the fact that I can have both fitted and working inside three minutes.

Personally, I'd prefer the IR illuminator to carry a tiny I.e.d. to indicate that it was switched on – the light it emits is invisible unless you're looking through the Atom – and it wouldn't hurt to have the same feature on the Atom itself, although it's easy to tell if the night sight is switched on by the height of the switch. At its low point, the unit is on, and vice-versa.

VERDICT

From what I've heard first-hand about Phil Hardman's experience with the Nightmaster Atom and IR illuminator, it seems that he's as excited as I am about the products, and he'll be revealing all next month. For me, I've found something that can ease me in to the exciting world of night hunting, without overtaxing my non-technical brain. I've got so much more exploring to do, but I know I'm going to enjoy every minute of my nocturnal research. ■



The ultimate Atom companion.

SPECIFICATIONS

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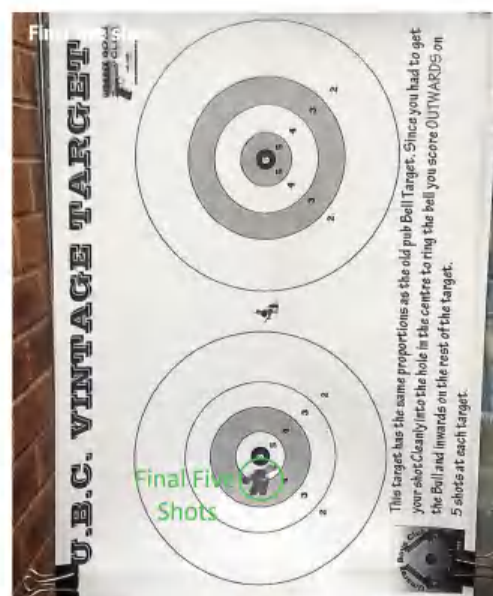
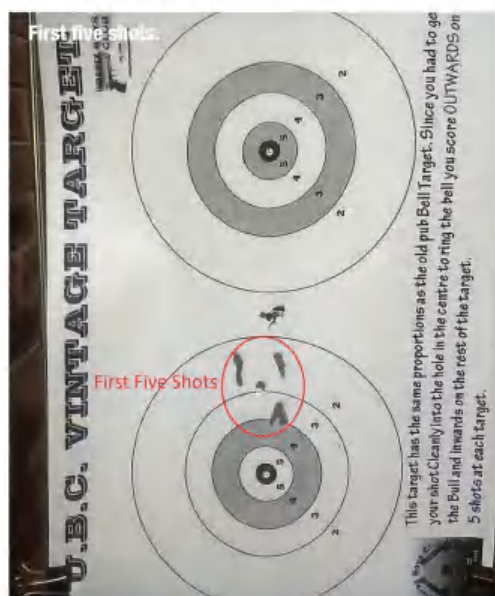
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LOVIN' THE WILDLIFE!

Umarex Boy's Club stalwart, Paddy Egan, reviews a most unusual rifle



"It is rather quirky and looks like something from a 1970s sci-fi movie"



I found it comfortable in the shoulder.

I have always liked quirky and unorthodox airguns, and the Umarex Wildlife fits into that category quite easily. I have been looking for one of these for some time, but never could find one for sale, let alone actually see it, and then one was brought into my local gunshop, as a trade-in. Solware immediately thought of me, gave me a call to see if I wanted it, and within half an hour I was there - it also came with a very rare Hakko 4x40 Japanese scope! I was a very happy bunny. These rifles were sold in the mid-1980s, when another variant was made, the Survival MX1, which had a compass, International Distress Signals, and a survival kit in the rear part of the stock, amongst other things. I saw one in a cabinet at Umarex's museum and that is another one on my wish list.

LOOKING AT THE WILDLIFE

So, back to the Wildlife rifle: As I said, it is rather quirky and looks like something from a 1970s sci-fi movie. At 4kgs it is not too heavy, but it is not balanced centrally because the plastic rear shoulder part of the stock is hollow, so the weight is mainly at the front. The stock is quite rigid and could take some punishment; the pistol grip has round 'bobbles' and the foregrip has horizontal 'slits' to improve grip and hold. The barrel looks more like a shotgun, with the rib on top; on one side is stamped 'UMAREX cal 4.5mm', and on the other, 'Made in West Germany' which points to when Germany was divided into east and west.

The front sight is fixed and surrounded by its shroud, whilst the rear sight has windage and elevation. There is a standard 11mm raised dovetail that runs along the whole of the top action so it keeps its lines with the barrel ribbing, which I think is a nice touch. Once in the shoulder, it is surprisingly comfortable, and you get positive grip and quick sight alignment due to its straight top lines.

BREAK-BARREL

The Wildlife is a break-barrel and it's really easy to open. There is no »



I soon had the cans spinning.

SPECIFICATIONS

There is not much detail about these rifles and I contacted Umarex to see if I could get more information on it. Umarex kindly gave me the technical data:

Technische Daten: (Technical Data)

Lieferbare Kaliber: (Available calibres)

4,5 mm/.177

5,5 mm/.22

Gesamtlänge: (Overall length 960 mm

Laufänge: (Barrel length) 246 mm

Gewicht: .(Weight) 4,0 Kg (ohne Zielfernrohr) (without scope)

Geschwindigkeit: (Velocity)

In der Version: (in the F version)..... 4,5 mm ~ 175 m/s: 5,5 mm ~ 122 m/s

I thought I'd keep the German, because it was made in West Germany.

“I had cans flying all over the place and it really reminded me of my youth”

need to tap the end of the barrel to release it from its lock, like on some other rifles, but there is some effort needed to cock this rifle - or maybe I'm just out of practice. Once cocked, an automatic safety is engaged, situated on the left-hand side of the stock just above the trigger, and in keeping with the theme it is also large and chunky. To disengage the safety it is just a case of pushing it forward to make ready. The trigger isn't a blade-type, but

again, keeping with appearance it is a solid block, which goes into the pistol grip when the trigger is pulled. It is certainly not a match-grade unit, because the trigger travels rearward loosely until it picks up the pressure, and then lets the piston go quite sharply with an audible twang - and a noticeable, jumpy recoil.

CAN-DO ATTITUDE

I used our UBC Vintage Competition paper targets and

also went old-skool by putting some cans out. I started with open sights and a paper target, just to see where it was set at 6 yards. The grouping of the first five shots were high and rather spread out, and I presumed that this was mainly due to it not having been fired for some time. I carried on putting lead down-range, and adjusting the sights accordingly; this is a rarity for me because I've always got other things to do and never have enough time to spend

on one thing, but this time I wanted get it right. I alternated between paper targets and cans, and it was a blast (pardon the pun). I had cans flying all over the place and it really reminded me of my youth. By the time I'd shot half a tin of pellets my arms were aching, but I managed to tighten the groups and get it relatively bang on, which for me was impressive.

The rifle came with a rare scope, the Hakko 4 x 40, which



Cocking took some effort.



I'm a happy bunny

The safety slides like this.



was made in Japan at the same time as the rifle. Stamped on top of the scope is 'Malti Color Reticle' - I think the Japanese got their spelling wrong somehow, but the scope does have four changeable colours on the reticle. To change the colour, you twist the transparent coloured rings (black/red/green/yellow) and the ambient light filters in and sets the colour on to the reticle. I have never seen a scope like this before, and the reticles are very clear indeed, plus the scope and rifle complement each other very well

due to their rarity and quirkiness.

HAPPY PADDY

Since I have shot the rifle I'm more than happy with it, and it brings me right back to the early days of shooting when everything was self-contained, and you could feel the recoil. I know the Umarex Wildlife will not be everyone's cup of tea, but it has certainly lived up to my expectations of being a fun, quirky, old-skool air rifle, so if you are hankering for an old or rare gun like this one, keep looking because you may find it - or like me, it will find you! ■

"I think the Japanese got their spelling wrong somehow"



The Hakko has a multi colour reticle.



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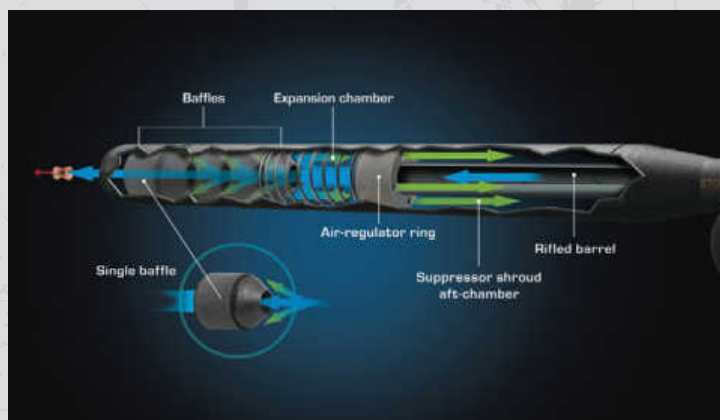
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Nothing else handles like this great little plinker.

"When you first handle this rifle the experience is unique because there's nothing else like it"

Phill Price shoots a classic cowboy gun for some rapid fire fun



Having read enough history books about the American Wild West, I now know that the story of the Colt Peacemaker revolver being 'the gun that won the West' probably isn't true. As we all know, rifles are more accurate, easier to shoot and hit harder, so it seems likely that the Winchester lever action was the one that beat the bad guys, and put meat on the table. They were designed to be light and slim so that they fitted into a saddle scabbard, making them easy to transport. You'll have seen in the photos that there's a metal loop bolted to the left side of the receiver that would take a lanyard to attach to the saddle. This meant it couldn't be lost when galloping, or if your horse bucked.

The fast handling was well suited to gun fights, which typically

happened at relatively close range, and the fact that you'd be more accurate with it and have many more shots than your enemy with a six-shot revolver, meant it was likely to be the winner.

Collectors of American guns will love the fact that, as a replica, this rifle is stunning. The weight, balance and looks are dead-on and the functionality will be very familiar to anybody who has fired the real thing. On the original, the recoil was pretty sharp because of the rifle's light weight, but our Co2-powered pellet firer is totally recoilless.

LIKE NOTHING ELSE

When you first handle this rifle, the experience is unique because there's nothing else like it. The receiver is slender and the overall feel is much more like a sporting shotgun than a lumpy, modern airgun. It was designed when function was more important than

looks, so there's nothing in its build that isn't necessary.

You may well never see me write this again, but I didn't want to fit a scope to this gun. Yes, that's right - Me, Mr 'high-tech scope' Editor would rather use open sights than modern optics on this rifle. It's true that a scope might well give tighter groups, but

that would be to miss the point. This isn't a target rifle; it's not a hunting gun - it's a plinker, perhaps the ultimate plinker, and as such doesn't need to be a precision tool.

I simply love the way that this rifle comes up to the aim. You can get your face into the stock and look along the barrel and the



Umarex supplies a tool to remove the Co2 capsule.



The rifle is supplied with a set of accessories.

Many of

pellets such as Umarex's own 7.4grain Mosquito, which suited this gun a treat. The magazine is relatively shallow back to front so you must be sure to seat pellets deeply enough so that they cannot catch on the action as the mag' rotates. Similarly, you should avoid long pellets that might not clear the rotation.

SPEED SHOOT

With the big Co2 capsule and a multi-shot magazines, this is a real, fast-fire, fun gun. Line up six baked bean cans in a row and see which of your friends can bowl them over fastest, and you'll understand why this rifle is so much fun. It's also beautifully made. The one on test has a nickel-plated finish that adds corrosion resistance to good looks. Traditionalists might argue that there were no stainless steel guns in the Old West, but I like the looks anyway.

This lovely rifle isn't cheap but that's okay, because the build quality, performance and durability will repay your investment many times over. I'm not a plinker, but this rifle brought a smile to my face every time I handled it, and that has to be worth the money. ■

"Line up six baked bean cans in a row and see which of your friends can bowl them over fastest"

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer	Umarex
Importer	Armex
Web	www.armexairgun.co.uk
Tel	0121 643 4900
Model	Lever action
Power source	Co2 (88gramme)
Shots per fill	460
Length	996mm
Weight	2.8kg

RRP 399.00

simple, open sights are right where you're looking. It's almost like magic. Those of you who shoot shotguns will know this feeling from the days when you've shot a gun that fitted you perfectly. The idea is that the gun points where you're looking, and this one does for me.

MOUNT-LOOK-SQUEEZE

I found that I could hit close-range, full-size, knock-down targets in seconds, with a

The mag' arms pops out like this.



mount-look-squeeze action that was at once alien and natural. Look and shoot was the name of the game. Plinking targets were soon spinning and falling right out to 20 yards, after which the open sights were just not able to offer the precision needed. For somebody who spends their time trying to shave another 0.5mm off a group, this relaxed way of shooting was joyous and refreshing.

The build of the rifle is clever in that it hides an 88 gramme Co2 capsule inside the wooden butt, so that the original lines remain unsullied. A quick depression of

the loading port cover releases a discreet arm that accepts the ubiquitous Umarex 8-shot rotary magazine that I know so well.

This little mag' is well proven and reliable.



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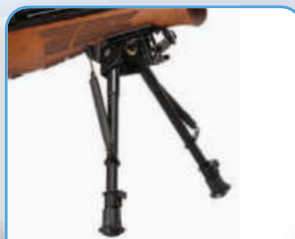
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BACK TO THE FUTURE PART 4

Dave Barham takes the PCP plunge and enjoys a night's barn-shooting for rats



My pride and joy – the new Gamo Coyote PCP.

I signed off last month by saying how impressed I was with my friend Mick Ball's array of pre-charged pneumatic rifles, and that I hoped you would be reading about my first hunting forays with my very own PCP. Well, I have taken the plunge and bought myself one; unfortunately, it wasn't

THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA

You've got to love the Internet. There I was, sitting by my roaring fire with a small libation in one hand and my iPad in the other, on what was a rather chilly, windy, rainy night, and I happened to post a picture of the November

a brief chat on Messenger he kindly invited me over to shoot with him and his daughter Carla. Of course, I accepted, and in the following weeks we exchanged quite a few messages and arranged an evening hunt that suited us both.

As D-Day grew ever closer, Mark informed me that we would be heading off to one of his farm permissions in order to clear some of the rats from a grain barn. When I discovered exactly what we would be doing, I became really excited. I hadn't shot rats properly for over 25 years! Sure, I'd nailed the odd one or two down at the lakes I used to bailiff, but I hadn't been on a proper cull of this scale – it was something I

remember doing as a kid with my mate and his dad, and the memories came flooding back to me – probably helped by the Guatemalan rum and ice in my glass.

A LITTLE HUNTRESS IN THE MAKING

I set off at 5pm from my house in Lincolnshire, and it took me two hours to drive the 70 miles to Mark's place, thanks to single-track roads, lorries and rush hour traffic. As soon as I arrived I saw Mark and 11-year-old Carla waiting by their car, eager to get going. A quick 'hello', a huge smile from Carla, an exchange of boot contents, and Mark was driving us the 15-miles to 'Barn X'.

During the journey I quizzed Carla about her shooting exploits, and that conversation really made me smile.

"So, do you like hunting with your dad then, Carla?" I asked.

"Yeah, I love it, especially rat shooting. I'm a really good shot, I get head shots all the time. The best night we had was 21 rats – it was brilliant," she replied.

It turns out that young Carla is a very lucky girl indeed. She's been shooting since the age of three, which is a massive head start on anyone else I know in the world of shooting. What's more, it soon became apparent that Carla absolutely loves hunting. This is definitely not 'I'll do it to grab some quality Daddy time'. Oh no – young Carla is a proper little huntress in the making – in fact, she already puts a few adult hunters I know to shame, both with her enthusiasm and her skills.

As the conversation progressed, it turned out that Mark is a full-time pest controller. He works for a rather large company by day, using traps, poisons and the like,

"I hadn't shot rats properly for over 25 years!"

ready in time for this month's hunting piece – more about that later on – but for this episode of 'Back To The Future', I was lucky enough to connect with a father and daughter duo, to shoot some rats in a barn in Suffolk.

issue front cover to a group that I'd recently joined on Facebook (Air Rifles UK), and shortly afterwards I received a private message from a chap called Mark White. We didn't know each other from Adam, but Mark was familiar with my mother Rosie's work. After



Mark helps to steady Carla as she prepares to take her first shot of the evening.

but by night and at weekends he runs his own pest control business (RMB Pest Control), mostly with rifles, ferrets and even raptors! What a magnificent environment for young Carla to be brought up in. It's no wonder she's so keen.

RAT O'CLOCK

We arrived at 'Barn X' at 7.45pm, and Mark stopped the car outside a huge metal door whilst he prepared the first rifle. He'd brought a few with him, so we could all have one, but after a

"I love my hunting and my photography, with equal passion"

brief discussion I told him that I really wasn't too interested in having a few shots myself to begin with. I wanted to shoot with my camera to get some pictures in the bag first, and besides, this piece was all about him and Carla.

Mark instantly replied, "You're much the same as me then, Dave. I do this for a living, and I'm just as happy to take other people shooting and watch them shoot, rather than take the shots myself."

He's right. I love my hunting and my photography, with equal

passion, and tonight was no exception, but I knew I'd get my chance for a few kills later in the session.

So the plan was hatched. Mark and Carla would go ahead and position themselves, while I stayed back, help to do some spotting and take pictures.

PITTER PATTER, LITTLE RATTER

The great thing about grain barn shooting is the deathly silence inside. You can hear those rats

scurrying around, especially when they're running up and down the metal rafters or up a pile of grain.

As soon as Mark opened the door we saw two rather large rats running left to right across the barn floor. Carla was really excited. "Quick, Dad! There's one - and another," she whispered.

Mark knows his stuff and was quick to usher Carla toward a

small pile of rapeseed. Here Carla and he could lie down and rest the rifle on top of the seed - a very easy vantage point for Carla to use the rifle efficiently.

For the purpose of tonight's shoot, Mark had brought along his .22 Air Arms S300 PCP with a rather sexy Yukon Photon nightvision scope. What an awesome piece of kit that is: Dear Santa, I've been a very good boy!

FIRST BLOOD

With Carla and Mark in position it didn't take long for the rats to come out to play. The first shot for Carla resulted with the first kill in the bag, with a rather large rat, and as she went to pick it up Mark shouted, "Where's your gloves?"

Oops, Carla had left them at home, so she used her jumper to tail the rat, swiftly followed by a trip to the car to get the anti-bacterial hand wipes. It's really not worth taking the risk with rats, no matter where you're shooting them. Weil's disease (Leptospirosis) is not nice and it's

caught from coming into contact with rat urine and bodily fluids. With symptoms ranging from a mild headache and fever, to bleeding lungs, meningitis or kidney failure, you never know which rats are carrying it - always be safe and wear gloves when picking up.

With rat number one placed by the barn door, Mark and Carla moved to the other end of the barn and set themselves up on a heap of maize. It wasn't long before rat number two was winging its way to ratty heaven. However, after taking out the second rat, all went quiet. Mark missed a shot by not closing the breech properly - we've all done that, and it made me feel 'human' knowing that here was a guy who does this for a living.

After 20 minutes of silence, Carla announced that she was getting bored and wanted to shoot more rats, and that we should go to the 'slurry pits'.

Mark agreed and as we got back into the car he informed me »



There's been a rat or two on this pile of grain.



The rapeseed pile was the perfect vantage point for the end of the barn some 25-yards away.



Outside the barn there were more rats to be shot.



"Where have they gone?"

that we would be shooting out of the car windows – proper gangsta style! All joking aside, he went on to explain that this really wasn't a place for getting out of the car.

"The first time we shot here, Dave, we got out of the car. There were so many rats that they were running in between us and over our feet. Apart from that, it's thick mud and I've been told it stinks", he said.

"You've 'been told'?" I replied.

"Well yes, I've had a few accidents over the years. I used to be a stunt man before I became a pest controller, and then I had a bad car crash. I lost all sense of smell," he continued.

Then Carla piped up, "Yeah, sometimes the smell down here is unbearable. He can't smell it, but I can - it's gross."

MESSY AND SMELLY

We made the short drive down a

dirt track toward the slurry pits, and I knew we were getting close – my nose told me so. Luckily for us, we had a fairly stiff breeze and some drizzle, which 'dampened' the smell somewhat, but I hate to think what it would be like here in the height of summer! I just thought, 'poor Carla'.

These slurry pits contain everything from manure to rotten vegetables, rotten grain and just about anything else that's biodegradable and has the potential to release nutrients back into the soil for growing more grain. Of course, its absolute heaven for rats, and as we approached our vantage point I saw 20 or more of the critters scurrying in all directions. Wow! This was gonna be fun.

Carla was in the back seat of the car with the loaded rifle perched on the window frame. A

few seconds later and 'pop', she let off a shot, which was quickly followed by a 'thwack' of lead on bone.

"Head shot!" she shouted, excitedly.

That was followed by another, and then another. Both Mark and I were using torches to spot the rats, then telling Carla where they were. It was a great team effort. Then it was my turn.

"Right Carla, give Dave the rifle now. It's about time he had a go," Mark insisted.

THREE OUT OF THREE

This was the first time I'd ever looked down a Photon scope, and I was mightily impressed, I can tell you. It was soon quite apparent that our 'Blackpool illuminations' effect with the torches was putting the rats to cover, so we decided to switch them all off and use the

scope to its full advantage. A quick scan around and I found a group of five rats at about 25 yards. I settled down for the shot, and as one of them popped his head up I calmly squeezed the trigger. Another satisfying 'thwack' and I had my first kill – a rather instant kill, head shot.

After reloading quickly, I settled back down and within a matter of five seconds let my second shot of the evening go. Again, another perfect kill. Then, three minutes later, I had another chance and converted that into kill number three, although this time I must have been slightly off the mark because I had a 'bouncer' and the rat jumped a few times before doing a death roll and laying to rest.

"Right then, that's me done." I said.

I'd made three kills, and although I was really getting into it I wanted Carla to carry on shooting. After talking to Mark I kind of got the feeling that I would be going back for round two, with my own rifle, so I didn't hog the gun – this was Carla's shoot.

Mark took the rifle next for ten minutes and made a couple of swift kills, then we let Carla finish off for the remaining half-an-hour.

TIME FLIES

We ended up leaving the grounds at around 11pm, after a drive around the whole farm in search of a stray rabbit or more rats, but we didn't really find anything else of interest.



Mark takes aim at a rat in the rafters, helped by lamp-girl, Carla.

"A quick scan around and I found a group of five rats at about 25 yards"



First blood went to Carla!

In just a little over three hours of shooting we'd managed to rid the farm of 12 rats. What a great shooting session, and what great company! I doubt this is the last we've heard of young Carla and her dad, Mark, in Airgun World. Something tells me we'll be going on another hunting session, sometime in the near future.

MY PRIDE AND JOY

I mentioned at the start of this piece that I've taken the PCP plunge. I didn't have an awful lot of disposable income to spare,

and I really wanted to buy new for peace of mind and warranty, so in the end I opted for the new Gamo Coyote in .177.

There are loads of reasons why I made this choice, and I'll go into those in more detail next month, but for now, I've swapped over my trusty Tasco scope to the new rifle, added a Webley Pro-Tilt bipod, and I'm good to go.

I can't wait to get out and play with my new toy – and you'll be reading all about my hunting exploits with my new baby next month. ■

Better safe than sorry – the anti-bac wipes are a good idea.



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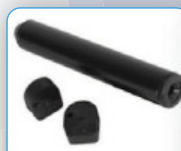
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GOLDEN TICKET GIVEAWAY!

Fancy a fantastic day out at the Air Arms factory? Of course you do!

Hi-tech manufacture meets traditional gunsmithing at Air Arms HQ.



As you may have seen in the *News* this month, world-leading airgun manufacturer, Air Arms, has just announced a fantastic free competition. Air Arms is rightly proud of its Sussex-based manufacturing headquarters, and even more so about what goes on there, and to celebrate both it's planning to throw open the company's doors to 10 lucky airgunners on the 2nd of February 2016!

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

Air Arms is giving away five golden tickets, each admitting two people, for a full day's exploration of the company HQ, including the manufacturing processes, rifle building, and a no-holds-barred question and answer session with the Air Arms team, plus some top lunchtime scoff and a glorious goody bag stuffed with over a hundred quid's worth of Air Arms kit.

As you can see, winning a golden

ticket gives you and a friend of your choice the airgun opportunity of a lifetime; all you have to do is get yourself to Hailsham in Sussex, and watch in wonder as your great day unfolds!

It's going to be an occasion that will live in the memory forever, and your chance of winning one of those golden tickets is waiting for you as soon as you turn this page. Don't do that yet, though, because here's what's waiting for those golden ticket winners.

THE GRAND TOUR

The winners will meet the Air Arms team at 09.30 on Tuesday the 2nd of February next year, so make sure you're free on that day because you really won't want to miss this one.

After meeting the team and enjoying a quick refreshment, the winners will set off on a guided tour of the Air Arms machine shop. This is where bar stock and other raw materials meet the hi-tech influence of CNC machinery, plus just the right amount of traditional engineering skills, to create and finish the components from which Air Arms' world-beating rifles are made.

It's an incredible journey and you'll see those famous airguns take shape before your very eyes. You'll pause for lunch and a chat at 12.30, before moving on to the second phase of the tour.

IF YOU BUILD IT ... THEY WILL COME

After lunch, you'll get an exclusive behind the scenes look at the various stages of assembly that take place before each rifle is tested, calibrated and tested again. Each model has its own dedicated gunsmith who knows every nut, bolt, washer and seal that combine to make some of the finest air rifles in the world. Just watch it all come together and ask as many questions as you like, because this opportunity is a genuine once-in-a-lifetime chance to find out the full inside story of the Air Arms range.

AND FINALLY ...

After the assembly shop tour, you'll all meet up for more refreshments and a question-and-answer session, before collecting your goody bags and saying farewell to the factory and the Air Arms team. Your head will be spinning by now, but what a truly amazing day you'll have had. Now, turn this page, get that entry form in by the 13th of January next year, and keep those fingers crossed. Good luck! ■



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Please enter me and a companion in to the free prize draw to win an exclusive behind the scenes tour at Air Arms HQ on **Tuesday 2nd Feb 2016**.

Name.....

Address.....

Telephone No..... Date of birth.....

The rifles I currently own are.....

Do you or your companion have any special dietary requirements; YES NO

Do you or your companion have any other special requirements; YES..... NO



The draw will take place on Friday 15/01/2016. All winning entries will be notified either by telephone or email. All winners will be announced on Air Arms social media and in Airgun World. This prize draw is in conjunction with Airgun World, only original tickets will be accepted. Any winning entrants under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult at all times. All winning entrants are responsible for making their own travel arrangements. Please complete and return your golden ticket no later than 13.01.2016 to AIR ARMS, 5&6 HAILSHAM INDUSTRIAL PARK, DIPLOCKS WAY, HAILSHAM, EAST SUSSEX, BN27 3JF.
GOOD LUCK!

DO THIS!

They say nothing's certain in this world – but the editor begs to differ



Point 2. Pellet selection is absolutely vital.

Study the eight steps below, then put them all into action, and I absolutely guarantee that you will be a better shot for the effort. Some of you will be many times more efficient as far as consistent accuracy goes, and others will make significant gains. Everyone, and I mean everyone, will improve, and if the final two stages are followed – you'll just keep getting better. Yes, you've seen some, or even all, of these steps before, but it's practising all of them that brings about the certainty of improvement. Go on, give yourself a month of dedication to the cause of your marksmanship, and prove me right – because I know that's exactly what will happen!

1. MAKE YOUR RIFLE FIT YOU

Having a rifle, or a pistol come to that, that fits you properly is the finest possible foundation for improvement. If your airgun doesn't fit, you're making a massive compromise and that's the worst possible basis upon which to build a successful technique.

Either get yourself a rifle with an adjustable stock, or have your existing rifle altered to fit you. An adjustable butt pad and cheek



Point 3. Don't rely on one stance – especially if it's standing!

piece will make a world of difference to gun fit – and results.

2. CAREFULLY SELECT YOUR PELLETS

Everything you invest in every shot you take is translated by the pellet you shoot. Far too many airgunners let themselves down at the last moment by using imperfect pellets, and it's the ultimate folly, because pellet-selection is one thing we can control – so we should!

Find the best through batch-testing, then try washing, sorting, drying and lubricating your near-perfect pellets to give them that extra edge. Remember, pellets for PCPs can take an oil-based lube, whereas most springers prefer a wax-based finish. Above all, take every effort to find the very best pellet for your airgun – it's an absolute must.

3. DEVELOP YOUR STANCES

Don't rely on a single stance, especially if it's the standing one! Train yourself to shoot from the kneeling, sitting and prone stances, too, because these are all far more stable than standing. Get those stances sorted then, and while you're at it, make standing your 'last resort' stance, rather than your go-to one. It's time to change for the better and there's no better way than to ditch the least-reliable stance of them all.

4. UNDERSTAND THAT NO ONE CAN HOLD A RIFLE STILL

You think those elite shooters who are miles better than you are holding their rifles perfectly still on aim? They're not, because no one can from an unsupported position. So, whenever possible, get some support, and then realise that the movement of the rifle is caused by your having a pulse and breathing – neither of which is going away.



Point 1. However you go about it – make your rifle fit you properly.

Now, use your breathing to control the movement of your rifle, pausing breath only when your sights are on target. Make breath-controlled movement part of your shooting sequence, not some enemy you're constantly fighting. Also, if the aiming sequence starts to break down, lower the rifle and start again, rather than hanging on to take the shot. Stay calm, breathe deeply, and relax – and you'll be in control of those shots.

5. DEVELOP PERFECT FOLLOW-THROUGH

Follow-through is the easiest vital skill of them all. Simply hold perfect aim until the pellet strikes. That's it. This finishes the shooting cycle – yours and your rifle's – in a perfectly-controlled, consistent way, and when perfected will allow you to track each pellet to the target. Just do it – it's a huge step forward for any shooter.

6. ALWAYS WEAR A JACKET

Your shooting jacket is part of your equipment. It affects the way your rifle fits and the contact between you and your rifle. It's an 'insulating' layer that helps to absorb and disperse your nerves, pulse and various muscular twitches, and if it's properly fitted,

it's also a wrap-around brace for your shooting stance. When I was competing in FT, I'd wear revolting shorts in hot weather, but the jacket stayed on for each shot. Get the right one – and wear it to train and shoot.

7. NEVER STOP TRAINING

Don't ever think that regular shooting is the same as effective training. It isn't; mainly because shooting, be it match or hunting, isn't specifically targeted to your individual needs. Train like hell on the stuff you're least good at, but keep putting in the range time on everything else, too. Training is essential – there's no getting round this.

8. NEVER ACCEPT SECOND-BEST

Let's finish on a big one, and this is the biggest one of all because it controls everything. Your 'best' isn't the best that's available to everyone else, it's the best that's available to you, through reasonable commitment, some hard work, total honesty and the desire to be as good as you can possibly be.

Every time you don't do your best, whether it's failing to get the rifle and scope you know you need, or wimping out of training in rubbish weather, or simply not bothering with any of the eight steps described in this article, you're actually saying, 'I don't want to be the best I can be – I'll take second-best. Don't do that. Hit these eight steps with your resolve intact and your determination running at its all-time high. I promise you – you're about to amaze yourself! ■



Point 4. No one can hold a rifle still, so accept and adapt to that.

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This pre-charged pistol is capable of fantastic accuracy.

invention of rifled barrels that long-range accuracy was achieved. However, a right-hand barrel twist causes the pellet to climb up a wind blowing from the right, and climb down a wind blowing from the left. I have to admit that it's a very rare effect to see in the field, but I've seen this actually happen and it is a factor to consider when shooting at longer distances.

One wind problem that many novice shooters cannot get their heads around is whether or not the wind is blowing stronger at your shooting position, or down by the

ways. If the wind is blowing strongly from the left, and shooting close down the left-hand side of a solid wall or hedge, do not be surprised if the pellet deflects to the left. The wind hits the obstruction and comes back on itself.

The only real-time wind indicator is heat mirage, normally

"I try to stick to one type of pellet when shooting, and that's another reason that I use .177 for both HFT and general hunting"

target. The stronger the wind at the shooter, the more the pellet will be blown off if the same wind was just at the target. Fig 3. You will encounter this if you are shooting into a wood from a windy field, or out of a wood into a windy field. If a pellet is blown off 5 degrees at the shooter, it will deflect more than if the wind only catches the pellet to deflect it 5 degrees nearer the target.

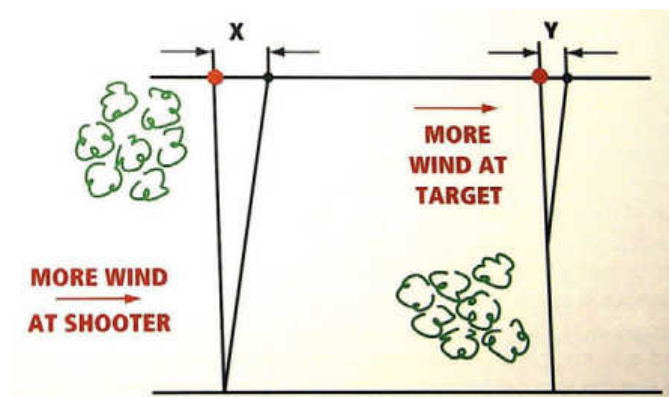
READ THE FEATURES

Natural features, such as in trees, hedges, hills, and embankments, man-made structures, buildings, masts and so on, all cause the wind to change direction in unexpected

found when shooting over open flat areas and caused by the ground heating up and hot air rising. This looks like the air is boiling when viewed through a scope, so you can see what the



As the pellet spins in flight it can climb or fall against the wind.



DON'T BLOW IT PART 3

Tim Finley concludes his series on how the wind affects our shots

This is the final part of the short series on outdoor air rifle shooting and the real-world effect of wind on the pellets we fire. I have purposely not mentioned pistols because these should never be used on living creatures, in their 6 ft.lbs legal UK limit guise. As for target shooting, it is much the same; the only pistols I have ever had the confidence to aim off for wind have been my FT

and HFT pre-charged pneumatics, which run at 5.5 ft.lbs. In fact the Steyr LP-50 I shoot has taken out targets at 45 yards with relative ease when there was no wind.

So, back to air rifles; one phenomenon that I have seen with my own eyes is the effect of pellet spin in a side wind. All pellets spin when fired through rifled barrels, which is what gives the projectile its stability, and it was not until the

wind is doing as you view the target, but it is not always easy to see with low-mag' scopes. It is very hard to find in woodland areas or rough ground, and disappears when the wind speed rises above 20mph. Do look out for it, though, because it does work very well.

Shooting in windy conditions is, without doubt, the hardest skill to master when using air rifles, and it can only be learned from shooting in different conditions. Practising on live quarry is just not done, so join a club and have a go at FT - even shooting once a week on a practice course, you will soon pick up the feel for aiming off. Don't get me wrong - you will never know it all. I've been shooting for over 30

learn where it shoots so the aiming-off process is done almost at a subconscious level. You find yourself just aiming off and taking the shot with no thoughts of, 'give it just inside the edge of the disc' in the case of target shooting, or 'just behind the skull will take it to the base of the ears' when it comes to hunting. I end up in this state of mind when shooting, more often than not. It's only when I am not sure of the wind's direction or strength that I begin to slow down on the aim and have to process what is going on to take that one shot, and in the case of hunting, I just do not take the shot if I really haven't any confidence due to wind conditions. It's just not worth wounding a living creature.

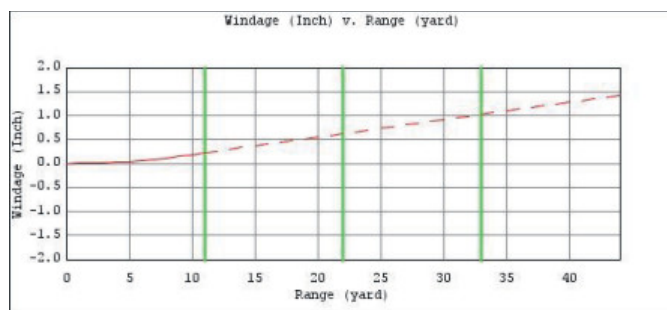
"You will encounter this if you are shooting into a wood from a windy field, or out of a wood into a windy field"

years and it still catches me out.

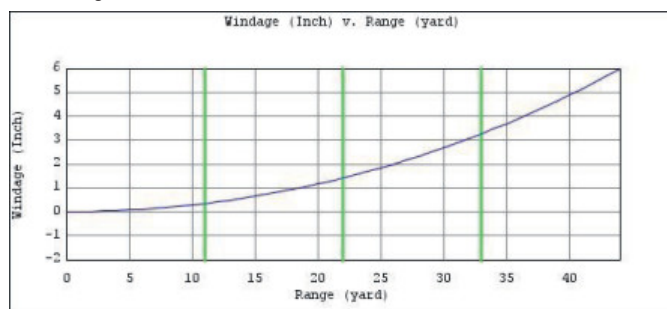
.177

I try to stick to one type of pellet when shooting, and that's another reason that I use .177 for both HFT and general hunting. You

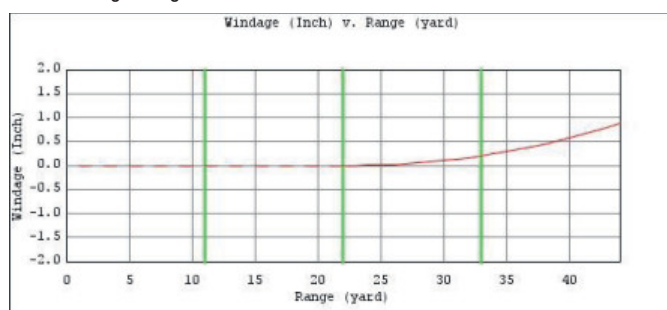
When it comes to FT or HFT, you have to take the shot. A favoured wind trick is the Yorkshire saying, 'When in doubt, give it nowt' - or in plain English play the percentage game. If you are not sure which way the wind is blowing,



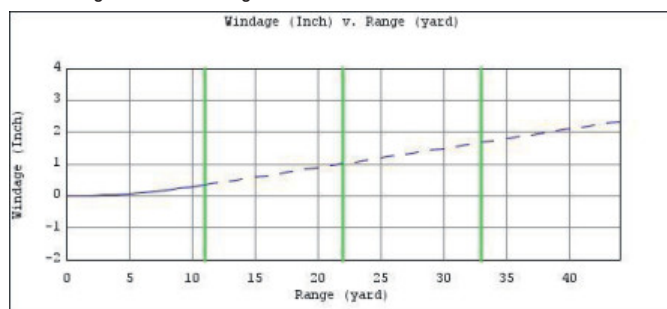
Wind hitting the .177 at the muzzle does this.



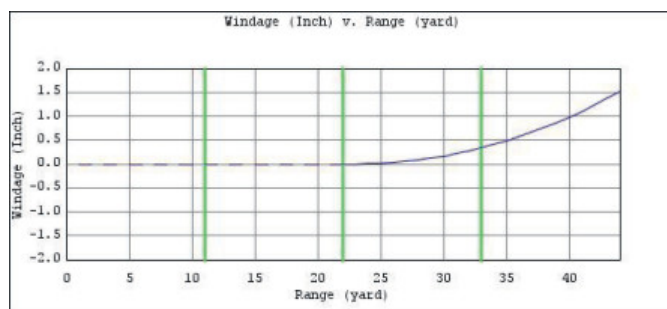
Wind all along the flight of a .22 does this.



Wind hitting a .177 down range does this.



Wind hitting a .22 at the muzzle does this.



Wind hitting a .22 down range does this,

or if it is constantly switching, aim at the middle of the 40mm disc - you still have 20mm each side to play with. If you learn anything from my

ramblings on wind shooting, remember not too out-think yourself, and don't be afraid to aim straight at something. ■



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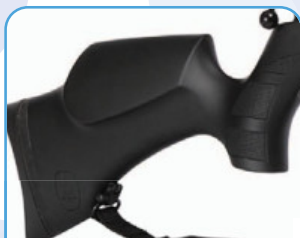
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OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS...

... and Gary Wain is just the chap to answer that call to action

If you've read my previous articles, you'll know that out here in the wilds of the Lincolnshire marshes, we - or at least I - have something of a rat problem. Over the winter months, the early dusk enabled me to keep them at bay using my home-built, night-vision rig, with little need to be out much after 9 o'clock, and still get a few kills. However, the late summer sunsets saw the time available to me to get out with the rig severely limited. Plus, like many of you, I have better things to do on balmy summer evenings than to sit in a shed and wait for rats. As you might imagine, my easing off the artillery seems to have resulted in something of an explosion in the rat population, and so much so that by September of this year I

was beginning to see the brazen little rodents out and about on the periphery of the patch, during the hours of daylight. It then dawned on me that this is exactly the pattern of behaviour that I had seen the previous year when several had burst out of a woodpile right in front of my wife and I, and prompted me to take matters in hand. Perhaps I'd been resting on my laurels, or maybe

this was a normal pattern of behaviour; population expansion forcing *rattus Norvegicus* to scavenge for food during the day, but either way, and I might add, with a degree of delight and gusto,

the battle was rejoined.

PLENTY OF PREVIOUS

From my experience the previous year, I knew that the first job was to work out where they were coming from and where they were headed. Rats are pretty territorial, but will travel quite a distance from their nests in search of food and water if none is available to them in the immediate vicinity,

and they will come out into the open, but tend to keep to borders and edges, places where there is shelter and cover. Rarely will you see a rat take a direct route from A to B; instead it will skirt around

and find the route that offers it the most protection. Armed with this knowledge, a degree of experience, and provided the runs are well used it's actually quite easy to spot them.

To set the scene; the piece of land my house sits on is roughly two-thirds of an acre, most of it being given over to lawn. I have a few outhouses and an old, flat-roofed garage which, like

most, has no room in it for a car and is filled instead with all manner of treasured possessions that might just come in handy one day. My wife refers to these treasured possessions as 'crap',

"My easing off the artillery seems to have resulted in something of an explosion"

Back to work, controlling the rats.



A few days into the baiting and this rat came to hoover up the remnants of the grain.

any given time, the only real option I had was to bait them into the areas where it would be easier for me to get a good opportunist shot. In the case of the dyke side, I chose the old 'log of doom'. It had been popular with the rats before and I could see it without even leaving my kitchen. Turning my attention to the garage, I decided that my best bet was to bait just outside the garage door in

the hope that if they were already in there, as suspected, it would bring them out into the open. There was of course the risk that if they weren't already in the garage, introducing a food source immediately outside it might cause them to set up shop inside.

Having decided the 'where', I got to thinking about the 'when'. I've spent many an hour night-vision ridding so it was quite easy

to predict their nocturnal movements. Rats, or at least the ones round here, seem to have a bit of a pattern with regard to what time they appear and disappear. Shooting them at night was easy. Shooting them during the daytime would take a whole lot more work on my behalf, and nothing but time, patience and observation would gain me the knowledge I needed. Actually, it would take time, patience, observation, feed grain and peanut butter - but you get the idea.

BAIT 'N' WAIT

After a few weeks of baiting and observing, I'd hoped to be able to work out their daytime patterns, figuring they were probably out and about first thing in the morning and just before it got dark. Seems I couldn't have been more wrong because I soon learned that there was very little, if any pattern at all to the times I was to see them. A change of tactics was called for, one that saw me placing the trusty S510 Ultimate Sporter within arm's reach so that should I see a rat heading for the bait I could do something about it.

What ensued was something of a watching and waiting game; with the Air Arms S510 fully charged with air and a full mag of pellets to hand, I would basically take every opportunity I could to cast a glance out of the patio doors toward the area of bait, and then having

»



Feeding off the grain, this younger rat was to be the first target of the day, but do I photograph it or shoot it?

but I, of course, know better. The reason I mention the garage is that I had a feeling it would provide the rats with a warmer place to sleep than a hole at the edge of the dyke, and having previously had mice set up shop in there, I didn't want to have the problem of unearthing a rat's nest when it became time to dig the mower out next summer. I also suspected that the rats favoured the row of trees that run along the dyke side at the edge of my property. I'd baited and shot them there previously, but there was no guarantee they'd be frequenting the same spots as before.

ONE OPTION

As it's pretty impossible to predict where a rat is going to appear at



Have confidence in your abilities and go for a head shot.



I use this old stump to zero my rifle, making it a bad idea for a rat to stand beside it.



This chap's had his last supper.

spotted a rat I would fetch the rifle in the hope of catching it still at the bait. Invariably, the rat would have made off by the time I returned, but more often than not would return a few minutes later unable to resist the peanut surprise left for him - the surprise being .22 calibre

in nature and 16 grains in weight. Of course, when writing an article for a magazine there is the further challenge of getting pictures of the critters in the act - when a rat finally does show itself, you have no idea how hard it is to reach for the camera and not the rifle.

SLOW-SLOWLY CATCHEE RATTY

This opportunist technique proved to be a lot more effective than the 'watch and wait' method I'd previously employed, with the added advantage that I was able to go about my day as normal, with just a weather eye being kept on the bait. Invariably, there were times when the rats came and went and had themselves a slap-up meal at my expense no less, free from the inconvenience of being unexpectedly shot midway through their main course. For the greater part, though, I was slowly picking them off and whittling down their numbers.

Over at the garage doors it was

a different story. I'd smeared peanut butter on a brick because the feed grain wouldn't work so well on gravel, and placed it in front of the doors. The bait was being taken all right, but I never seemed to catch the rats at it during the day. Fearing I had a major rat problem in the garage, and that the rats were just nipping in and out quickly, I set up stag one night with my NV kit and waited, hoping to catch them in the act. In the end, it turned out that I needn't have been too concerned; it wasn't rats taking that particular bait, but a rather plump badger who must have smelled the peanut butter aroma from across the fields and come to investigate. It goes without saying that I've now stopped baiting this point, and I'm concentrating all of my efforts on the log of doom.



This rat moved just as the trigger was pulled.

The log pile seemed an obvious place for rats to move through, but I could see no evidence of their presence.



"Odds are there are rats around you and you just don't notice them"

THEY'RE ALL AROUND US!

They say you're never less than 10 feet from a rat. I'd proffer that it's a little more than that, but the effect is much the same. If you live in the town, or in the country, odds are there are rats around you and you just don't notice them. So for all those keen airgun hunters out there who aren't fortunate enough to have access to permissions, perhaps you should try your own backyard. Just be careful of the back-stop and, of course, be prepared to sit, watch and wait. At the very least you'll get some fresh air and have a nice relaxing time, and if nothing comes your way, well there's always the latest copy of Airgun World magazine to keep you occupied. I'd recommend that nice young Gary Wain; he's always worth a read! ■

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AFTERMARKET SPRINGS

Jim Tyler is your guide to aftermarket springs



A manufacturer goes through lengths to select specifications, and generally they get it right. However, because it takes time and money for a spring manufacturer to set up the machine to produce a

particular spring specification, airgun manufacturers can reduce costs by finding a spring specification that performs tolerably well in whatever calibre a rifle is to be offered in, and for more than one model if possible. As a consequence, the manufacturer's original spring will usually be something of a compromise.

The same is true of many aftermarket spring suppliers, but some don't just offer one spring for a rifle in a range of calibres, they offer one spring for a variety of rifles from different manufacturers and in different calibres, and in some cases, the spring will be far from the ideal. Many people have reported that the aftermarket springs they've bought have had to be shortened before they would even fit in the rifle, and not everyone is comfortable with cutting a spring, closing the end coil and grinding it flat. Happily, you can find the specifications of most aftermarket springs online and if you have access to a good calculator, you can work out whether or not it will suit your rifle.

FIRST STEP.

Before ordering an aftermarket spring, strip the rifle and measure the original spring, which can be done using a digital calliper. In order of importance, the measurements are wire diameter, coil diameter, number of active coils (count the number of gaps between coils) and free length.

Spring stiffness varies as the fourth power of the wire diameter, and so slightly thicker wire will give a significantly stiffer spring. A spring wound from 3.25mm wire

A few minutes with a Vernier calliper and a calculator can save hours of experimenting with springs and preload.

"Before ordering an aftermarket spring, strip the rifle and measure the original spring"



will be 37% stiffer than one with 3mm wire, all other things being equal, despite the wire being only 8% thicker. When looking for an aftermarket spring, my advice would be to seek one as close to the original factory wire thickness as possible.

Spring stiffness varies inversely as the third power of the coil diameter. A 20.4mm diameter spring will be 8% stiffer than a 20.8mm spring, despite being under 2% less in diameter. Again, I would look for a spring with the same coil diameter as the original,

these respects.

It's well worth taking time to calculate the rate of the original spring, which can be done using a spreadsheet or a scientific calculator. The rate is a measure of the force needed to deflect (compress) the spring by a given amount, and it can be expressed in Newtons per millimetre (N/mm) or pounds force per inch (lbf/in); because in the UK we use the metric system to measure springs, it's easier to calculate in N/mm and convert if wished. The beauty of calculating the spring rate is

“Spring stiffness varies inversely with the number of active coils; the fewer, the stiffer”

unless there is a reason not to, such as choosing a narrower spring to allow clearance inside the piston for a sleeve.

Spring stiffness varies inversely with the number of active coils; the fewer, the stiffer - and spring free length determines preload. Yet again, I would suggest not straying too far from the original in

that it gives you a great basis for comparing original and aftermarket springs.

Many production rifle springs seem to be in the 5.5 N/mm to 6.5 N/mm range, many aftermarket springs considerably more, and perhaps with an eye to unrestricted export markets, some are a good deal longer and that's

Spring stiffness formula

$$(10000 \times WD^4) \div (CD^3 \times NC)$$

Where WD = Wire Diameter, CD = Coil mean Diameter (coil outer diameter minus wire thickness) and NC = Number of active Coils. This will give the coil stiffness in Newtons per millimetre. To convert to Pounds force per inch (lbf/in), multiply by 5.710146.

A simple formula for calculating spring stiffness.

Springs can have a slight taper, so measure the diameter of both ends, and average if necessary.

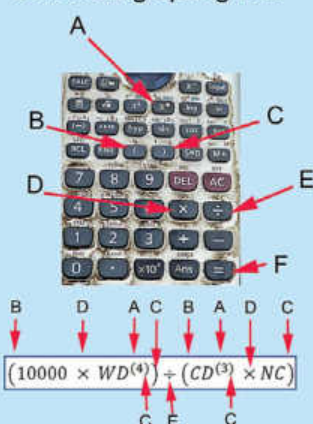


The wire diameter has a huge bearing on stiffness, so measure very carefully.

NO MATHS NEEDED!

You don't need to understand or do ANY maths to find a spring's stiffness, and how much energy it will make available to the piston, you just need to know which buttons to press. Don't believe me? If you use a computer, tablet or almost any modern electronic device, you are effectively doing hundreds, thousands or millions of calculations a second, just by pressing the right buttons. Using a scientific calculator is no different, and don't let the 'scientific' bit frighten you off - it's just a calculator with a lot of fancy extra buttons, of which you only need one (button 'A' in the illustration 'Calculating spring rate', which is usually marked 'Xn').

Calculating spring rate



Using a calculator is just a matter of knowing which buttons to press.

The illustration 'Calculating spring rate' shows you which buttons to

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	WD	CD	NC	Rate N/mm	Rate lbf/in		
2	2.9	17.9	23	5.361731508	30.6369338		
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
15							
16							

Enter spring data in yellow cells

Type text in red boxes into indicated cells

Spring rate using a spreadsheet

If you have a spreadsheet, entering spring data as shown will calculate the rate.

=D2*5.71046

=(10000*POWER(A2,4))/(POWER(B2,3)*C2)

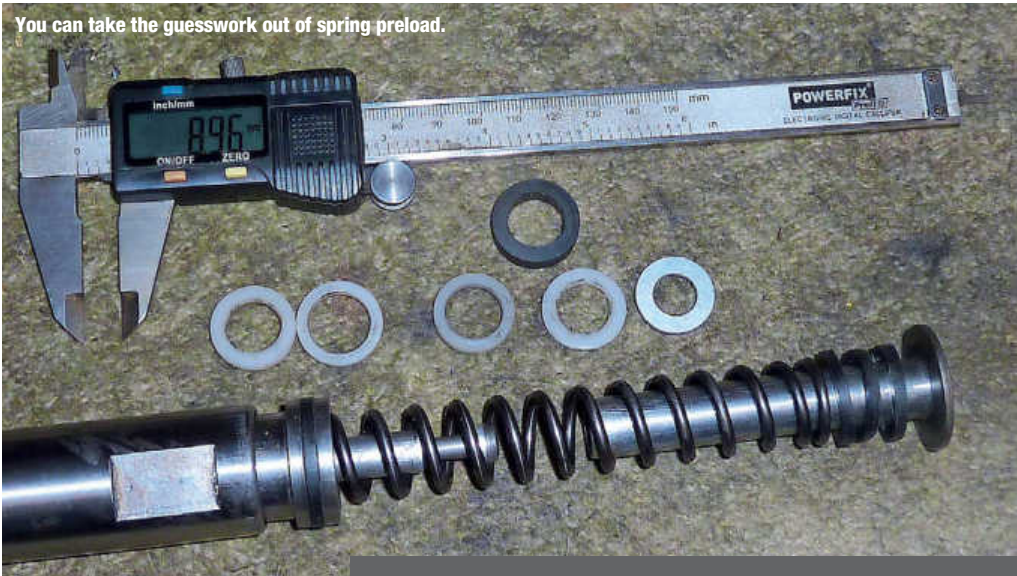
press to calculate spring rate in Newtons/millimetre. After typing in the formula, hit button 'F' to do the calculation. Spreadsheets are even easier; once you've entered the two equations, save the file, then type

in the specifications for any spring you like, and get instant answers. Copy the formulas shown in the illustration 'Spring rate using spreadsheet' into an Excel or Open Office spreadsheet, and away you go.

where the free length measurement of the original spring comes in, because if you find that a spring is both stiffer and longer than the original, it's probably best avoided. That's just a rough guide, and we can easily come up with a more precise solution.

ENERGY

If your pocket calculator skills are up to calculating the spring rate, you won't find it too taxing to calculate how much energy the spring will make available to the piston. Because we in the UK tend to think in foot pounds, the method shown in the illustration 'Spring and piston energy' uses



You can take the guesswork out of spring preload.

NO MORE PRELOAD GUESSWORK.

Suppose you calculate that your new spring is making 28 ft. lb. available to the piston, and the muzzle energy is 11 ft. lb., for an energy efficiency of 39%, but you want 11.4 ft. lb. at the muzzle. Rather than stripping the rifle, adding preload, rebuilding it and testing, then repeating the exercise until you get the desired

muzzle energy, simply divide the extra 0.4 ft. lb. by .39, and you'll find that the piston needs roughly an extra 1 ft. lb. to take the rifle to 11.4 ft. lb., then recalculate the piston energy adding a millimetre at a time to the preload figure until you get the 29 ft. lb. that will give you 11.4 ft. lb. (or very close to it) at the muzzle.

"You don't need to understand or do ANY maths to find a spring's stiffness"

imperial units, so first convert the spring rate N/mm to lbf/in (multiply N/mm by 5.710146) and the piston stroke and preload mm to inches (divide by 25.4), to give a result in foot pounds. If you wish to use Si units, use N/mm for spring rate, millimetres for stroke and preload, substitute

'1000' for the '12' in the formulae, and the answer will be in Joules. When you have calculated how much energy the existing spring can make available to the piston, you can gain a rough idea of what sort of muzzle energy a new or different spring may give in your

rifle, and how much preload will be needed. Most importantly, by calculating spring rate and spring/piston energy, you can avoid buying aftermarket springs that are unsuitable for a UK rifle. ■

Spring and piston energy

Spring energy formula $(0.5 \times SR \times (PS + PL)^2) / 12$	Preload energy formula $(0.5 \times SR \times PL^2) / 12$
---	---

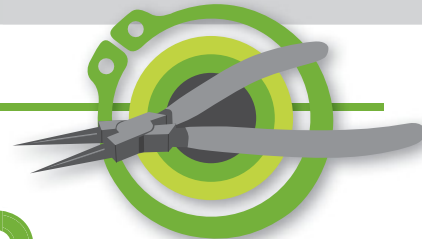
Where SR = Spring Rate (lbf/in), PS = Piston Stroke (inch), and PL = Preload (inch).

To calculate piston energy, subtract preload energy from spring energy.

Knowing how much energy the spring delivers to the piston takes the guesswork out of selecting the right spring.

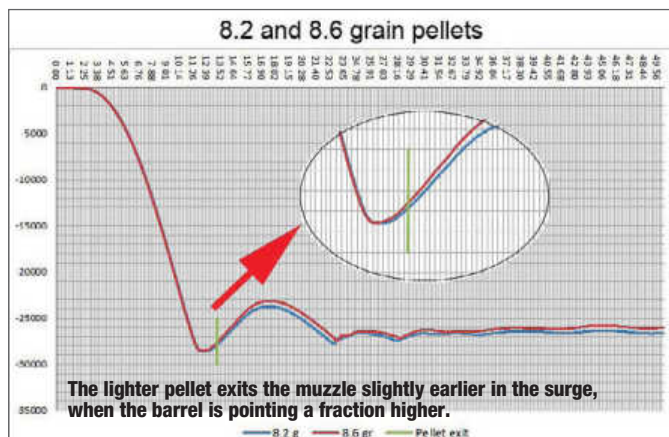
A spiral-bound notebook is open, showing handwritten notes. The notes include: "HW 55", "DIA 19.3 mm", "WIRE 2.9 mm", "COILS 23.5", "P/L 27 mm", and "STROKE 67 mm". A coiled metal spring is placed next to the notebook. Below the notebook, there are four small colored caps: red, red, green, and yellow.

The five bits of information required to unlock the secrets of the spring.



WEIGHING UP THE OPTIONS

Jim considers the effect of variations in weight between individual pellets from the same tin



When testing an airgun to ensure that it is safely within the legal limit, you really should weigh each individual pellet, because the weight displayed on the tin label cannot be relied upon

for such an important matter. A 5% increase above the weight marked on the tin, for instance, would mean a rifle you 'tested' at a safe 11.4 ft. lb. was actually 11.97 ft. lb. A 5% variation in weight in

pellets from the same tin is far from unknown, and even greater deviation from the weight marked in the tin is not exactly uncommon.

To weigh pellets, you could use jeweller's digital scales, which are widely available and often at very low prices, although before buying you need to be aware of two things; the quoted accuracy of scales is invariably expressed in grams, rather than grains, so a scale advertised as having an accuracy of 0.1g will only be accurate to ± 1.54 grains, which is useless for our purposes, and some of the cheaper models may prove less accurate than that. A scale with an accuracy of 0.001 grams will be accurate to ± 0.154 grains. More accurate

scales are available, but the prices rise hugely. If you buy a more modestly priced scale, there is an easy test of how reliable it is, and that is simply to weigh the same pellet several times - the worst scales will give several different weights!

The alternative to a digital scale is an old-fashioned balance beam scale, widely advertised as 'powder scales' and sold in gun shops for reloaders. As with digital scales, the more accurate they are, the higher the price.

The problem with owning a pellet scale is that it brings the risk of the pellet-weighing equivalent of chrono-itis, and causes the owners to become as obsessive about weighing pellets as chrono owners can be about measuring shot-to-shot variations in muzzle velocity. To know that your rifle is safely legal is priceless, so 'scale-itis' is on balance a risk worth taking, and using a scale can actually help to cure the dreaded chron-itis.

Many people worry hugely about shot-to-shot variations in muzzle velocity, which can be caused by nothing more than variations in the weight of individual pellets, and some wrongly conclude that there is something wrong with their rifle, and even try to cure the non-existent problem by having the rifle tuned, or fitting a tuning kit. If you weigh each pellet before testing, and calculate the muzzle energy, you will often find that the muzzle energy is much more consistent than the velocity, which reassures you that there is actually nothing wrong with the rifle, and so cures chrono-itis - in theory, that is.

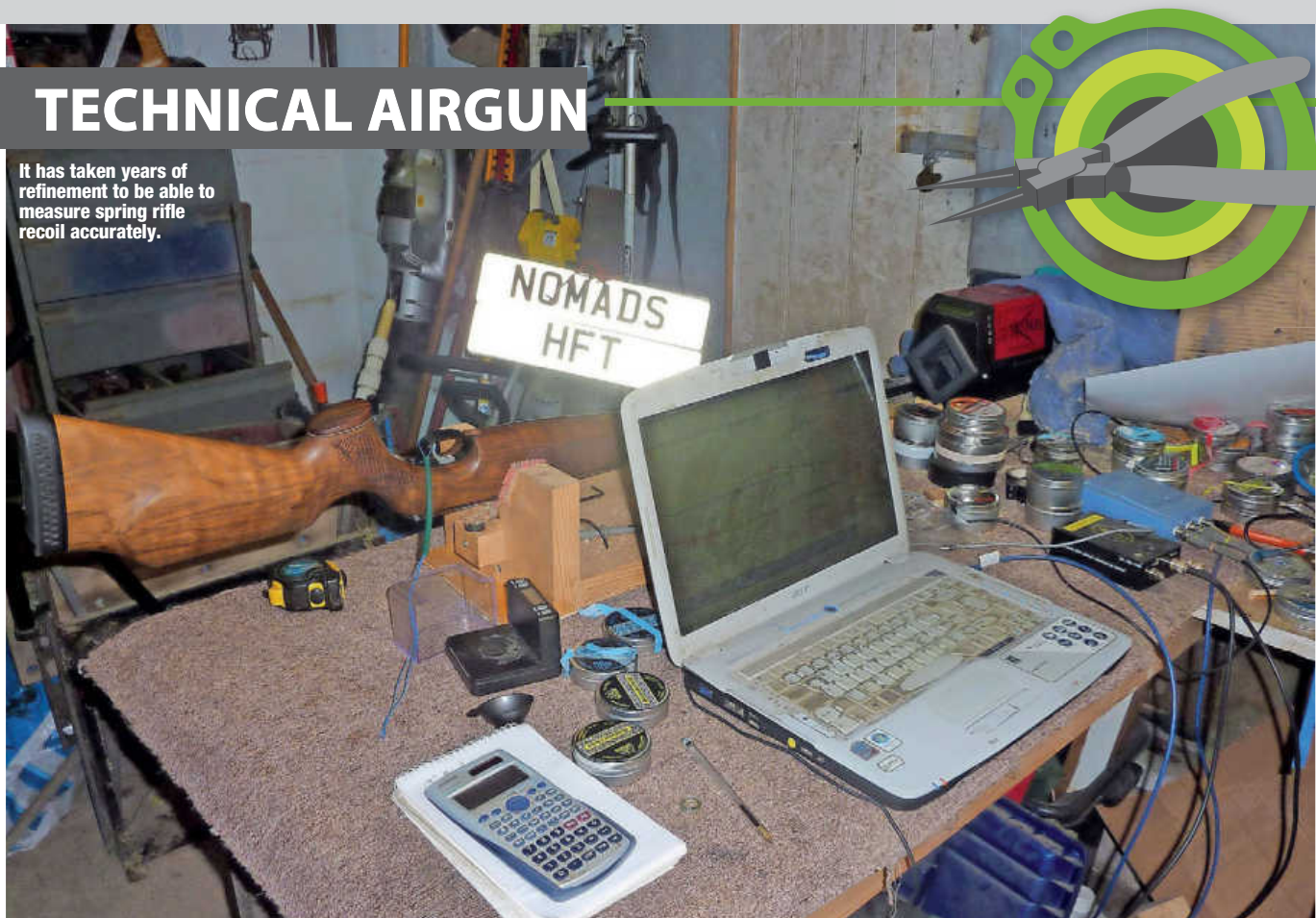


"The alternative to a digital scale is an old-fashioned balance beam scale"



TECHNICAL AIRGUN

It has taken years of refinement to be able to measure spring rifle recoil accurately.



STRING THEORY

You might be forgiven for thinking that variations in muzzle velocity must result in vertical shot stringing at range and, in the case of marked variations, you'd be right, but in the case of the minor variations caused by individual pellet weight, the answer is not so clear cut.

It is well known that PCPs tend to deliver higher muzzle energy with heavier pellets, springers with lighter pellets, but these are just general trends, and minor variations in pellet weight tend to be reflected in muzzle velocity just as much, if not more than energy for both springer and PCP. The difference is that, in a springer, both muzzle energy and velocity tend to decrease with an increase in pellet weight, but in a PCP, as the pellet weight increases, the muzzle energy may increase, but the muzzle velocity may decrease. In both cases, the general trend is for muzzle velocity to fall as pellet weight increases. The POI shift from a drop in muzzle velocity won't necessarily be the same for a springer as it is for a PCP, as we shall see.

The muzzle velocity may reduce slightly with heavier examples of a pellet, but something else rises slightly to help mitigate the effect

"You might be forgiven for thinking that variations in muzzle velocity must result in vertical shot stringing"

on pellet drop, and that something is the ballistic coefficient (BC). All other things being equal, an increase in weight equals an increase in BC, and an increase in BC helps the pellet retain a little more velocity in flight, and so the drop in POI at range caused by pellet weight variation may not be quite as great as the muzzle

velocity figures alone might suggest.

TESTING

Chairgun, and other ballistics software, will give you a pretty good idea of pellet drop at varying velocities and distances, but it cannot recalculate the tiny change in BC that accompanies a change

in pellet weight. To get a handle on how pellet weight and consequent muzzle velocities affect trajectory, you either need to test to find the BC, which is time consuming, and not really accurate enough outside a laboratory, or test individually weighed pellets on the range.

If you find yourself the owner of

A sensor behind the chrono allows me to calculate pellet exit time in the shot cycle.





Sorting pellets by weight is mind-numbingly boring, which is why so few appear to do it.

“the heavy pellets exited the muzzle later in the surge phase of the recoil cycle than any of the lighter pellets”

a tin of pellets with more weight variance than you'd like, weigh a sample and separate out the very heaviest and lightest for testing on a range. Because headwinds and tailwinds affect pellet drop, you need a calm day with gentle or preferably no wind and a range of a minimum of 40 yards if you want to see any measurable difference in pellet POI. Wind speed often reduces during early morning and late evening, so these can be the best times of day.

SPRINGER

Heavier pellets take longer to travel up the barrel, and so exit the muzzle a fraction later than lighter, faster pellets. The pellet exits the muzzle as the rifle surges forward and the muzzle drops, the butt rises, so the later the pellet

leaves the muzzle, the lower the shot will land. The question is whether the extra drop caused by this makes a tangible difference.

I had some pellets weighed into bands of 8.3 to 8.4, 8.4 to 8.5, and 8.5 to 8.6 grains, and decided to run a test using the 8.3 to 8.4 and 8.5 to 8.6 grain pellets, to measure any difference between the timing separating the piston coming to the end of the compression stroke and the pellet muzzle exit.

As shown in Table One, all of the heavy pellets exited the muzzle later in the surge phase of the recoil cycle than any of the lighter pellets, and the average time delay was 0.1172 milliseconds. That's not a lot, but it will add a tiny bit to the pellet drop of the slower pellets, because the muzzle is

falling, the butt rising, and the rifle will be pointing in a slightly different position by the time the heavier pellet reaches the muzzle. The lighter pellets gave an average of 11.6 fps more than the heavier ones, which would place the latter just 0.02" (0.5 mm) lower on velocity, before the later pellet exit was taken into account.

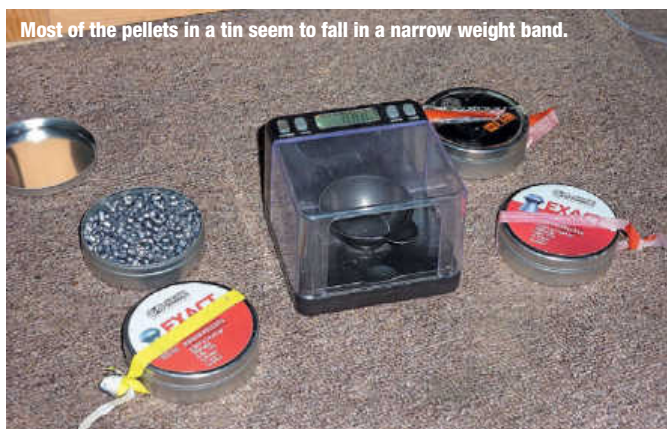
The pellets tested had an average difference of 0.2 grains. After sifting my way through a tin and a half of pellets, I eventually

found one weighing 8.2 grains, and another weighing 8.6 grains, so I tested those, and found they still exited the muzzle just over 0.1 ms apart, which will translate into in the order of 0.05mm of surge forward travel, and the vertical travel during that short period will be only the merest fraction of that.

As yet, I cannot measure muzzle vertical movement during the shot cycle, and I do not know of anyone who can. If the muzzle fell at 1 fps, typical of rifle surge horizontal velocity at pellet exit, and probably exaggerating the vertical velocity, then in 0.1 milliseconds its displacement would be 0.0012 inches, which would translate into something in the region of 0.1 to 0.15 inches at 40 yards. In reality, it's probably

less, but we won't know for certain until we are able to measure muzzle vertical velocity.

It appears that minor (up to 4%-5%) variations in weight between pellets have so little effect on trajectory that all bar long-range shooters, bench rest shooters, and the most dedicated FT/HFT shooters probably won't even notice the difference. When testing on the chrono for legality, even minor variations have a significant effect, so use only weighed pellets. ■



Most of the pellets in a tin seem to fall in a narrow weight band.



This very cheap jeweller's scale weighed the same pellet at 8.6 to 8 grains; you get what you pay for.

Table One						
Shot	1	2	3	4	5	Ave time ms
Light	1.186	1.114	1.153	1.103	1.185	1.1482
Heavy	1.324	1.326	1.227	1.245	1.205	1.2654
						-0.1172

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DAN WESSON 6 shot 8" revolver, Co2 45mm, boxed as new £110. Umarex Magnum Dessert Eagle pistol, Co2 45mm, matt black, spare mags, complete with carrying case as new, £160. Tel: 01625 511118 (Macclesfield).

WALTHER LGU Special Edition, .177. Just 100 examples, gold plated trigger and walnut stock, serial no. 24. Hawke 4-12 x 50 IR EV scope. £1,000 ONO. Buyer collects. Tel: 0779 2953917 (Walsall).

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Complete with 12lt x 300 bar air bottle and all fittings. £750 for both. Buyer must hold fac. Tel: 01268 556403 (Essex).

BSA ULTRA Multishot MK1, blueprinted by its creator John Bowkett. Black synthetic stock. 6-24 X 50 illuminated etched mil-dot scope on one-piece mount. Carbon fibre silencer and BSA Ultra slip £350. Can post. Tel: 07789 534614 (Essex).

THEOBEN EVOLUTION .20, with hand styled walnut stock by Don Robinson. Nice condition, buyer collects, no postage £400. Tel: 01728 648739 (Suffolk).

AIR ARMS S510 SL Carbine .22. Good condition with Q Tec silencer, sling, swivels no scope £430. Tel: 01754 873591.

BROCK COCK CONTOUR XL Elite .22, with silencer, 3 ltr fill tank all new April plus Walther 4-12 x 50 Illuminated scope £600. Tel: 0208 974 6748 (Surrey).

PECAR SCOPE 4X35, used but in great condition. Plain fine reticle £150. Nikko Sterling Nighteater 4-16 x 50 as new £100. Tel: 0121 7881050 (Birmingham).

TROPHY .177 multi shot pistol, as new fired only 36 pellets. Complete with PAO 2-8 x32 pistol scope. Both in wooden case, £225, buyer

collects. Tel: 01458 252382 (Somerset).

WEIHRAUCH HW99S .177 with Nikko Sterling 4 x 32 AO scope, plus SMK silencer. Buyer collects £200. Tel: 07792 953917 (Walsall).

AIR ARMS S410 .177, 11.6ft.lbs. early rifle, mint condition, just serviced, new air cylinder, right handed with adjustable bi-pod fitted. Nikko Sterling 4-12 x 46 scope, new fleece lined bag, unopened tin Diabolo Field. Quick sale hence £450 no offers. Ideal HFT. Tel: 01209 216985 (Cornwall).

S400 MPR RIFLE .177 with butt hook plus 10 x 50 scope, bottle, valve, case and seat £600. Tel: 01844 237893 (Buckinghamshire).

WEBLEY SENIOR Air Pistol .22 Serial No 1641, nice condition but not boxed. Buyer collect £150. Tel: 01728 648739 (Suffolk).

AIR ARMS S400F with ebony stock. Scope and silencer £465, plus Walther Rotex RM8 air rifle. Brand new, never used, still boxed, £395, postage available. Tel: 01209 612600 (Cornwall).

THEOBEN RAPID 7 Walnut stock only, ambidextrous £75, also TX200 stock only, has been reduced in size £35. Postage available. Tel: 01209 612600.

The Bullseyes service is for readers wishing to buy and sell airgun equipment as part of a non-commercial transaction. There is no need for such transactions to be made face to face (unless an airgun is FAC rated), but *Airgun World* requests that due caution is exercised when buying or selling an airgun. You must adhere to the current airgun laws. You cannot buy an airgun if you are under 18 years of age. Bullseyes are not offered to those who sell airguns as a way of trade of business

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MKDON

Tim Finley has some plinking fun with these new rifles from Crosman

I own a lot of Crosman airguns - Co2, and pump-powered. Their new pump-up air rifle bears a striking resemblance to the Bushmaster ACR firearm, although a scaled down version. The MK-177 is a variable pump gun so you can tailor the power to the range you are shooting at, and the type of projectile, be it steel BB or lead pellet; it has a five-shot clip for shooting pellets, and this removable clip is manually fed through the rifle.

The gun has so many features of note it is hard to know just where to start, so let's begin with safety. It has a manual safety catch situated in front of the trigger guard, and a red ring is shown around the edge of the button when it is set to 'fire'. The gun has a curved bolt handle on the left-hand side of the action above the trigger area which, when pulled back, cocks the hammer; the older models had it on the right-hand side, and the one on the MK-177 is bigger too. For BBs, it has a very large internal reservoir that holds 300-plus, 4.5mm, steel

BBs, and it has a plastic, rotating flap on the left-hand side of the action.

CHOICE OF AMMO

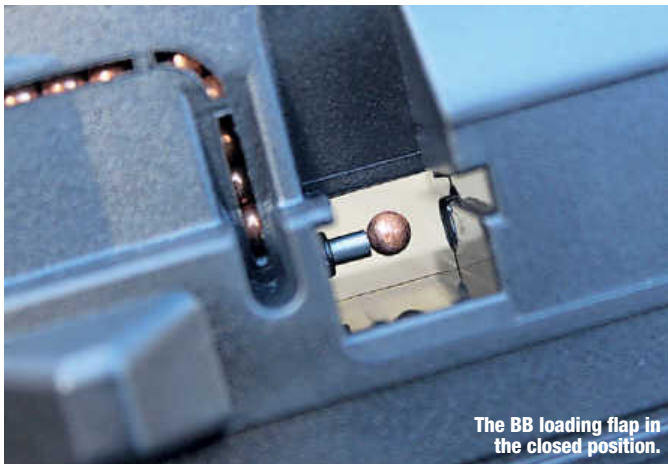
There is another internal magazine, moulded into the action below the

sight rail, which has to be filled from this reservoir, and there is a 'BB retaining button', as Crosman call it, which has to be opened to allow BBs to flow into it. Hold the MK-177 upside down, basically shake it to fill up the magazine and

once full you can shut the BB retaining button. Make sure to empty the internal magazine before using lead pellets, though, so that you do not double load the gun, which could jam it. As you pull the bolt all the way back, it allows a BB »

"The gun has so many features of note it is hard to know just where to start"





The BB loading flap in the closed position.

out of the magazine to fall on to a magnetic pad on the end of the bolt, then as the bolt is pushed forward, it has to go over the large gap in the action where the pellet magazine is inserted.

It states in the instructions that you must put in a minimum of three pumps. Any less may cause the BB or lead pellet to stay jammed in the barrel. You'll see from the photographs that the fore end section that you pump has

at 15 yards.

SIGHTS

I'll talk about the sights now, before moving on to accuracy testing. The MK-177 has a rather good set of open sights. There is a front post, and a rear, peep-type sight with two differing peep holes that you can flip back and forth to whichever one you prefer. The rear sight can be adjusted for windage via a screw on the left-hand side of

The rear sight has two peep elements.



fitted a red dot to the tan rifle; you will need to use Weaver/Picatinny scope mounts or red dots sights with a Picatinny fitting, but these are easy to get hold of now. The rubber butt pad comes off, allowing storage of four pellet clips and the open sight tool – clever – and the recoilless operation makes the MK-177 ideal as a young person's training rifle.

A good safety tip not mentioned in many instruction pamphlets is that if you wear prescription or reading glasses for shooting, then you must wear safety or shooting glasses over the top of them. When shooting BBs this is a must, and well done to Crosman for pointing that out.

The Crosman MK-177 is a very

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer Crosman

Country of origin USA

Distributor ASI 01728 688555

Model MK-177

Type Multi-shot rifle

Power source Pneumatic manual fore end pump

Cocking effort 6kg

Calibre .177 (4.5mm)

Action Pellet from a 5-round clip and 18-round BB magazine (with a 300-plus-round reservoir)

Sights Fixed front post, fixed rear notch, sight rail

Safety Manual

Overall length 838mm

Barrel length 440mm

Pull length 308mm

Weight 1.5kg

Trigger weight 1.5kg

RRP (TAN) £139.00
RRP (BLK) £129.00

"the long sight-base of 430mm makes for very accurate shooting"

44mm long Picatinny accessory rails on each side. I tested the gun using five pumps for a BB and ten for a pellet. BB shooting is always associated with rapid-ish fire and plinking, so putting in ten pumps for every BB shot would get a bit boring. Over the chronograph, with five pumps, and 5.4 grain Crosman Copperhead BBs, it came out at 530fps or 3.3ft.lbs. Ten pumps for a BB took it up to 620fps or 4.5ft. lbs. With 7.9 grain Crosman Premier pellets, it left the barrel of the MK-177 at 480fps for five pumps, and 590fps for ten pumps – or 4 and 6ft.lbs and the cocking effort is not great at around 6kg. Five pumps for BBs is perfect for plinking, and ten for more serious stuff like blasting plastic toy soldiers

it, and the front post has elevation adjustment via a special tool, which also has a section for the windage adjustment.

I fitted the Crosman-supplied open sights to the black version for accuracy testing because the long sight-base of 430mm makes for very accurate shooting, and I shot a 15mm, five-shot group with Crosman Premier 7.9 grain pellets using 10 pumps. When using five pumps and Crosman Copperhead BBs, it was only marginally bigger at 20mm. You have two choices when fitting the front sight; the long 385mm top rail, or a 35mm long section set 12mm lower than the top rail. This lower section I used for six yards, and with the front sight tool I got the sights dead on. I

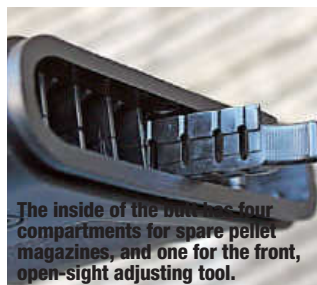
I fitted a tan, red-dot sight to match the colour of the rifle.



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The magazine takes five lead pellets.



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The new 'silenced' models, being introduced following customer demand, feature the addition of a 1/2" UNF silencer adapter and a compact sound moderator, that is only 135mm in length and is extremely lightweight at 101 grams. This model was found to offer the greatest level of sound suppression of all models tested -by length and weight-when tested recently by magazine. The silenced models are available in a 9-shot (.177) multi-shot version featuring a self-indexing rotary magazine, that offers 45-55 full-power (up to 5.5ft/lbs) shots from a single 12gr CO2 capsule and the UK's only .25 (6.35mm) single shot pistol.



The Adapter/ *Get Shorty!* Combination is also being offered as an 'easy fit' aftermarket option for all 'Trophy' models and will also fit most pistols with a 10mm barrel, such as the SMK 'Victory' range.

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With so much squirrel activity i didn't need to be as stealthy as normal.

HUNTING HEAVEN

Phil Hardman follows a tip-off to shooting heaven

This month, I have been truly blessed with some of the greatest airgun hunting I have ever experienced. Not just for the action itself, but also just the where, and when of it all. It all started in a conversation with a friend of mine, who uses the woods on my permission to walk his dogs.

Walking the same route three or four times a week, and being a keen hunter himself, he'd noticed that on every single trip, he'd spot the same squirrels on the same trees.

"You wanna get yourself down with the rifle, mate. I bet you could have a good day down there," he assured me.

This particular wood is huge, running for several miles, so I got out a map and asked him to show me the area, but he had other ideas.

"Why don't we go now? I'll show you."

It was 7pm and dark outside, but I grabbed a torch and we headed off out. The area isn't one I had spent much time in before, but I knew where it was once we got there, I usually skirt around it, following the route of the river, down in the bottom of the wood, but here, up on the bank at the edge of the wood, he assured me, was where the action is. There's a small clear path running through it, where he walks his dogs - and he isn't alone. Apparently a few others now use it too, but it isn't a public footpath, so although I'd probably encounter other people, these would be friends of the landowner and more used to shooting-type

activities than regular members of the public might be.

After arriving back home I gave the gamekeeper a ring to make sure I was okay to shoot there the next day, and once I'd got the nod, I set about studying satellite images of the wood to plan my route through it.

Up and at 'em

The next morning, I was up and about early, pretty excited. I love this piece of permission; it's a proper old English woodland, and at this time of year it looks nothing short of spectacular in its innumerable shades of gold, brown, red and yellow. I am sure that many times in the past we have all been told of areas that are heaving with quarry, and more often than not we are left disappointed when we actually check them out for ourselves. 'Millions of rats' to a non-shooter, usually means there are a few to us, but my mate is a hunter too, we grew up shooting together, and he knows what a good day's hunting is, and he knows that I know exactly what that means because we have experienced hundreds, if not thousands of good days out in the field alongside each other. If he says it'll be a good day, chances are it'll be a good day, so I was extremely optimistic about my chances of success as I grabbed my gear and headed down to the wood.

I had a walk of about half a mile before I reached the area I'd visited the evening before, but I had the



My Jack Pyke camo blended in with the mixed woodland very well.



"You wanna get yourself down with the rifle, mate. I bet you could have a good day"

rifle ready just in case any shots should present themselves. I didn't spend too long looking around, or stalk particularly slowly. If anything, I'd say it was more of a purposeful march as I walked along the well-worn track that leads over the river and up to the opposite side of the wood. Just as I reached the far

edge, where it meets a small field, there's a fork in the path. Usually, I'd follow the main track straight on, but today I took a left and after a few steps through some waist-high ferns, came out into what looked like a completely different wood. This flat plateau that sits high above the rest of the

wood has evergreen ferns dotted all over the floor, and the trees are closer, and interspersed with younger pines and other species, giving it a more closed-in feel, with better cover.

The path through it, worn by the dog walkers, was a real godsend in that it offered me a silent approach,

so I decided to stick to that as I moved slowly through. I had only gone maybe 20 yards when I spotted the first target. A large grey squirrel jumped from the woodland floor and up onto the trunk of a beech tree. It paused about two feet from the ground, before skirting around the back of the

Despite being a long shot, with no wind I was totally confident.



"At 27 yards, I am unlikely to miss, even free-standing, which I practise a lot for situations exactly like this"

trunk and appearing at the opposite side, four feet up. I didn't hesitate for a second, the rifle already shouldered by the time it reappeared on the other side of the tree. At 10 yards I knew it was game over for this particular squirrel as I squeezed off the shot and the pellet hit it perfectly, right

behind the eye. I knew instantly that it was a perfect shot and a clean kill, but the squirrel's claws clung on to the bark of the tree for a second, before it flopped lifelessly to the ground.

Reload!

I'd just shuffled the side lever on

my HW100 to feed another pellet into the barrel, when another grey began calling and chattering at me from up in an oak tree 45 yards away. Slowly, I sank to my knees and got comfy for the shot. The squirrel was sitting side on, flicking its tail, obviously aware of my presence, which meant that moving any closer was out of the question. My HW100 and I are a well-versed pair, and I have every confidence in both the rifle and scope combo, and my own part in the process of accurate shooting, so it was with supreme confidence that I took aim, just a smidge of hold-over needed, and I sent the pellet on its way. The shot hit home and the squizzer was sent reeling backward off the branch it had been sitting on, spinning down to the ground below.

Instantly, out of the corner of my eye, I spotted another, bursting from the leaf litter and up onto a tree trunk 15 yards in front of me. It paused about six feet up, but it was looking around the other side

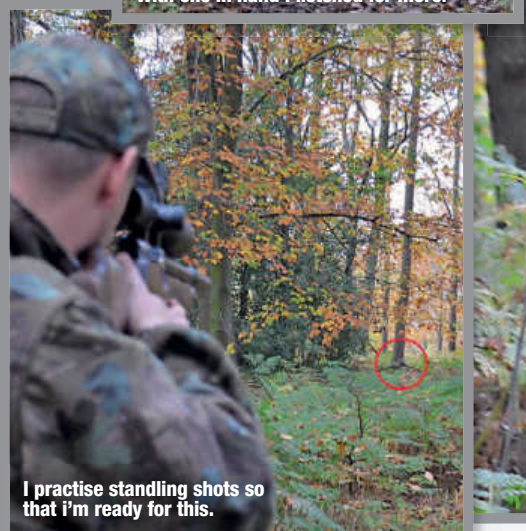
20 yards further on, but it was making a hasty retreat through the treetops, so I headed back to the main path to continue my silent stalk at the edge of the wood.

Still air

It was a perfectly still day, no real air movement at all, with only the sounds of songbirds chirping in the trees and the scratching of falling leaves as they brushed against the tree trunks, to break the near total silence. I kept mistaking the latter for squirrel claws on the bark, which is more often than not, the first sign you get that there is one nearby. Today, though, most were busy on the woodland floor, collecting up fallen acorns, and burying them ready for winter. I spotted the next next doing just that about 30 yards ahead, moving between patches of fern that obscured my view of them periodically, but also kept me hidden as I made my approach. I closed to 25 yards or so when a squirrel suddenly appeared atop a



With one in hand I listened for more.



I practise standing shots so that i'm ready for this.



There was lots of commotion in the distance, so I went for a look.

"The squirrel was sitting side-on, flicking its tail, obviously aware of my presence"

of the tree, away from my position. It had obviously heard the impact of my last shot, not the rifle itself. The squirrel having its back to me meant I didn't have a shot so I held off for a second as it moved around the tree trunk. It paused once more to flick its tail and then moved further, reappearing on the other side, head down, where it stopped, and completely froze. It had seen me; it was looking right at me, but I too was looking at it, through my scope. A split second later our staring contest was abruptly ended as I sent a .177 Weihrauch FT Exact pellet smashing into the tree rat's skull, sending it slumping earthwards. I paused to catch my breath. I'd only been here a few minutes and had managed three squirrels without so much as taking a step between shots. I gave it another minute to see if anything else was in the vicinity, but with no movement I got up to retrieve the fallen greys. As I went to collect the 45-yarder, I spotted another about

small fallen branch. I didn't see it jump up there - one minute it wasn't there, and then it was. I froze solid, waiting for a second to see if it had sussed me, or if it would continue on. It didn't move a muscle, so I slowly started raising the rifle, as carefully as I could. It was aware of me for sure, but I don't think it had grasped the real and present danger it was in, because in what seemed like the age it took me to get up on aim, that squirrel never so much as twitched a muscle.

At 27 yards, I am unlikely to miss, even free-standing, which I practise a lot for situations exactly like this. I slowed my breathing and got into my rhythm, raising the cross hairs up over the squirrel and then letting them gently settle back down until they intersected its head, with a tiny bit of hold-under to compensate for the shorter range, and then fired! The squirrel paused rigid for a split second as the pellet hit home, and then



Note how my hands and face stand out. It's a shame that I really hate wearing gloves.

"My hunch was correct; sitting about a yard into the field on a bare patch of earth, was a grey squirrel"

slumped off the branch as its mate scampered up the nearest tree and then did its best treetop aerobic escape routine as it disappeared into the distance.

After making the retrieve and stuffing my haul into my backpack, which I'd left stashed away at the base of a tree, I continue on my way. The field at the edge of the wood had a lot of crow and pheasant activity in it, and the corvids in particular seemed really reluctant to fly away, despite them being seemingly aware of my presence, and my intentions. This really intrigued me, what was it that had them so interested that they thought it worth risking an encounter with me, rather than fly away? I'll be honest I could have bagged at least one of them, but I wanted to get closer, to get a clearer picture of what was going on before I acted; sacrifice a kill today, for perhaps many more tomorrow, if you will.

Let me see

I moved closer, out to the fence line, and started to get an idea of

what was going on. The pheasants were spaced out from 30 yards into the field, with a much higher proportion nearer one particular part of the fence line, and the crows were in the same sort of pattern. Instantly, I knew what I was seeing, feeding hierarchy! There was an overhanging oak that hadn't completely dropped all of its acorns yet, and what it had dropped were falling onto the grass field in plain sight of the crows. Why risk landing in a wood full of potential predators when you can sit safely out in a field with a good all round view, and eat? This much activity had to attract squirrels. They're so inquisitive that they had to be here - if I had followed the crows to this banquet, they would have, too. I decided not to drop any of the crows, and instead stick to my initial plan of targeting squirrels, so I moved a few yards closer to get a better view of the base of the tree and the area of ground directly in front of it.

My hunch was correct; sitting about a yard into the field on a bare patch of earth, was a grey squirrel.



What a day! I'll be back there soon.

I had a fence to rest on, it was 35 yards, which is my zero range, with no wind - formality? You betcha! The strange thing is, even the sound of my shot and the resulting impact, which knocked that squirrel over without so much as a twitch, only spooked half of the crows. Several stayed put, and it wasn't until I moved to reload the rifle that they took to the sky. I picked up my kill and made my way back along the way I had come, which despite only being a

couple of hundred yards, took me easily another hour. I sat at the base of a tree for a while and let things settle, before continuing until I reached the point at which I'd started. All in all, I had accounted for six grey squirrels - good going for less than two hours in the field, but more importantly, I had found somewhere that was the sort of place I had dreamed of hunting in as a child. Yeah, to me at least, I'd found airgun hunting heaven!

See you all next month! ■

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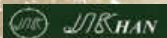


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A SIGHT TO

Phill Price gets a sneak peek at new optics from firearms giants SIG

SIG firearms are some of the most highly respected in the world, being used by elite military and law enforcement teams all around the planet. Their reputation is unquestioned as being strong, durable and reliable in the very worst conditions you can imagine. Having conquered this sector, they've decided to broaden their horizons into other areas related to their core market, including airguns. I saw these at the huge IWA gun show in Germany in the spring and was immediately impressed. Pre-production samples will be in our hot hands and we'll bring you our early impressions as soon as we can.

I was also intrigued to see that they're entering the optics world of scopes, binoculars and red-dot sights. These are key tools for tactical units, as well as for hunters and the sporting reflects this. There's a dark

grey, stealth-looking finish that makes them stand out from the crowd, allied to a few angular edges for that futuristic appeal. The two pairs I had to look at were early pre-production prototypes that had been used and abused heavily in the field whilst durability testing. They'll come with flip-up lens covers and a 'deluxe' neck strap as standard.

ZULU 5

The Zulu 5 model had a 10 x 42 spec' which has higher magnification than I typically use for airgun hunting, but I appreciated the compactness of the design. At just 730 grammes and 140mm in length they're very compact. The magnesium body accounts for much of the weight saving and this is covered in a soft rubber-like armour, so they should be able to take the knocks in the field. Writing as



I liked the compact build.

somebody who wears prescription glasses I was pleased to see that the ocular cups have a good range of adjustment to suit everybody's eyes. It can be frustrating to have to take your glasses off every time you need to use the bins.

Internally, SIG has employed some very modern elements such as High Definition (HD) glass to offer

superior clarity and colour correctness, whilst a silver deposition phase-coated BAK4 prism with dielectric mirror coating is claimed to bring unmatched resolution and image contrast. Finally, they used a broadband, fully multi-coated lens system to offer a bright and vivid image, even in low light conditions. That all sounded great, but what

"The handling felt good and the image quality was impressive"

The Zulu 3's open frame offered excellent handling.



BEHOLD

SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer SIG

Importer Highland Outdoors

Web www.highlandoutdoors.co.uk

Models

Zulu 3, 8 x 32 £242.99

Zulu 5, 10 x 42 £387.99

£242.99 - £387.99

the eyecup, making for quick and easy correction. A weakness of lesser binoculars is that they require too many revolutions of the focus wheel to move from one distance to another, but these SIG models don't suffer from that. Just a relatively small movement covers most normal hunting distances, which is just how it should be.

As I guess we should expect, any product proudly carrying the SIG brand isn't going to be cheap and the 'entry level' Zulu 3 range starts at £242.99. This may be more than some people are used to paying, but it's still a quarter of the price of European optics whilst offering impressive performance. They meet the IPX-7 standard, rated for complete water immersion up to one metre and for fog-proof performance. The militaries of the world respect these international standards as proof that products will do what they say. What it means to us is that you could drop these binoculars into water a metre deep, for half an hour, and they'll be unaffected, or in other words - no amount of rain will make them leak.

My time with these binoculars was short but it was long enough to make me look forward to a full review as soon as I can. ■

Tethered lens covers will come as standard.



were they like to use? The handling felt good and the image quality was impressive, but I won't know just how good until I have a pair for a proper long-term test early next year; full low light testing is the key to reading how all those fancy internals show their worth.

The second model I saw was the Zulu 3 8 x 32 which is more my kind of specification. These use an open-frame design which is right up to date and very light. When you

have your rifle and all your other kit, a heavy pair of binoculars can be a burden, so with these weighing just 500 grammes they're no chore to carry along.

BOLD CLAIMS

The catalogue tells me that the low dispersion glass offers maximised clarity and colour, whilst silver deposition, phase-coated, BAK4 prisms create unmatched resolution and image. Again, the

image quality was good. I had a chance to use this pair while out rabbit shooting at dusk and I can vouch for good low light performance. Their ability to resolve a beige rabbit on a dusty paddock in low light made the difference between a kill and walking right by. I actually preferred the ergonomics of these to the more expensive model.

Both pairs have their dioptre adjusters on the right barrel under

"Their ability to resolve a beige rabbit on a dusty paddock in low light made the difference between a kill and walking right by"

A rubberised finish adds grip to the handling, and that makes you more accurate.



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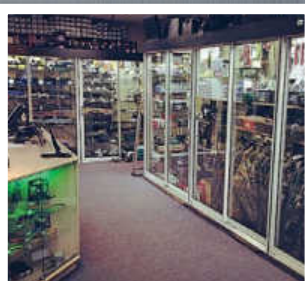
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AT ARMEX

The Airgun World team visits one of the UK's biggest importers of airguns

We've just visited Birmingham-based airgun importer, Armex, a company that's going from strength to strength. They've recently recruited more staff who have brought valuable industry experience to the team, to keep up with the growing demand for products, and the senior management team has also been reorganised to make the best of their individual skills, streamlining the way the company runs. As we walked around their building we noticed that the warehouse is bulging with product from their number one supplier, Umarex, for which Armex is the official UK importer.

We spoke to the on-site gunsmith who was busy working on a break-barrel, spring-piston rifle, and he told us that they can service and repair all the products they sell, right there in Birmingham, saving the need to return the guns to the Umarex headquarters in Germany. This means a quicker

turnaround and better service for British customers.

Of great interest to us was the polymer coated stock, Rotex RM8, on display at the Midland Game Fair, and Armex has them arriving any time now. This buddy-bottle-

fed, pre-charged pneumatic rifle has been a big hit in its wooden stock version, so those who hunt in bad weather can choose a finish that will survive the very worst conditions and come up looking good.

with an aggressively serrated section further back. There's also a hardened glass breaker and a curved seat-belt cutter hidden in the handle.

The final one was the Multi Tac Pro, a multi-tool with a twist. As

"those who hunt in bad weather can choose a finish that will survive the very worst conditions"



Armex offers a huge range of interesting knives.

Accessories are also a big part of the business and we saw some interesting knives and multi-tools.

The first was a simple, folding knife - the TFK II Pro - that looks just the job for the airgun hunter. The 2¾" blade is spot-on for game preparation duties, and the synthetic handles mean that it can be scrubbed clean for proper hygiene. The next was the Rescue Knife Pro, designed for use by the emergency services for dangerous situations like extracting somebody from a car that's been in a crash. The Sandvik 12C27 stainless steel blade has a plain edge at the front

you'd expect, there's the usual blade and pliers, but similar to the Rescue Pro there's a glass breaker, and a seat-belt cutter. The neat trick that makes it stand out is a tool that accepts the driver bits, which include Phillips, chisel point, and hex drivers, adding hugely to the versatility. These are just a few of the massive range of knives on offer from Armex's huge choice of guns and accessories - all of which can be seen at www.armex-airgun.co.uk

Rotex RM8 Polymer	£558.00
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SQUIRREL PASTIES

Rosie Barham prepares a tree-mendous meal that you'd be nuts not to try



A Delicious Vermin! lunch for one.

These little pasties are easy to cook and so handy to grab from the freezer when you fancy a quick lunchtime snack; microwave for about a minute and

infant mouths to feed and they can't manage a large pasty – apart from my eldest granddaughter, who takes after her father.

incorporated into something pastry-wrapped, they'd eat it. Strangely, I know quite a few

grown men who do this too, so perhaps I wasn't the only mum to hoodwink small children. »

“I know quite a few grown men who do this too, so perhaps I wasn't the only mum to hoodwink small children ”

they're ready to eat. If you cook the squirrel first, and make sure that all the vegetables are very finely chopped, the pasties are even quicker to assemble - and everyone I know loves them.

You can make them any size you like - traditional pasty size for a main meal - but I prefer these little ones because they're more versatile, and sometimes, I have

Years ago, when my boys were small, I was inspired to make this kind of thing because they had a tendency not to eat vegetables if they could be seen on the plate. Eventually, they sussed that I'd blitzed green things into the gravy and refused even that, so I had to find another way until they developed a more adult palate. I found that if a few veg. were



Simmer squirrel with onion, carrot and celery for 30 minutes.

Squirrel meat, swede, onion, potatoes, thyme, stock cube.



INGREDIENTS:

Squirrel meat
Half a swede, one onion and two small potatoes,
very finely diced
Two tablespoons of concentrated chicken stock
(Or dissolve a stock cube in two tbs of hot water)
Thyme – fresh or dried
Salt and pepper
Shortcrust pastry
One egg, whisked.

METHOD:

Pre-heat the oven to 170°C.
Mix all the ingredients, apart from the pastry and
egg, in a large bowl.
Season to taste with salt and pepper.
Roll out the pastry and cut into rounds – I've got
a gadget, but a floured saucer will do the job just
as well.
Place a small amount of the filling in the centre
of each round.
Egg-wash the edges and fold into a half-moon
shape.
Crimp, egg-wash and bake for 30 minutes.

Place everything in a large bowl.



Add stock and mix well.



Place a tablespoonful of filling in the centre.



Egg wash the edges, fold over, egg wash the top ...



... and repeat.



Bake for 30 minutes at 170°C,
until golden.



I always partly cook my squirrel first, whilst I'm doing something else in the kitchen. It's no trouble to bung a squirrel or a mature rabbit into a pan with some potherbs and let it simmer as I clean the work surfaces, wash up, or prepare veg for an evening meal. If you leave it for about half an hour on a low simmer, you'll find the meat easier to remove from the bones, and you can freeze it for future recipes; I don't waste anything, if I can help it – especially time. Of course, if you do have the time – and patience – to take the meat off without heated help, then you're better organised than me, and I salute you! ■

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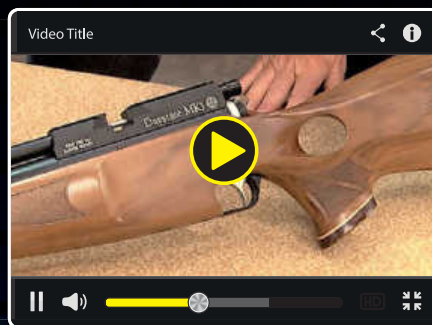
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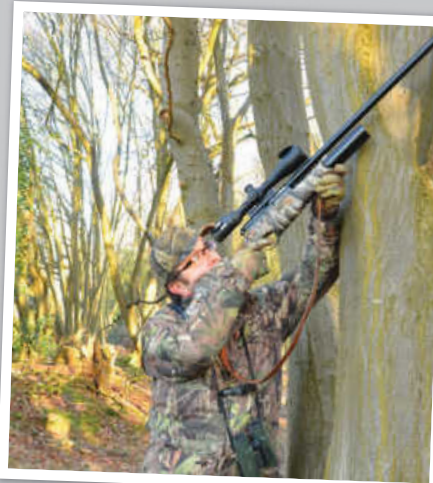
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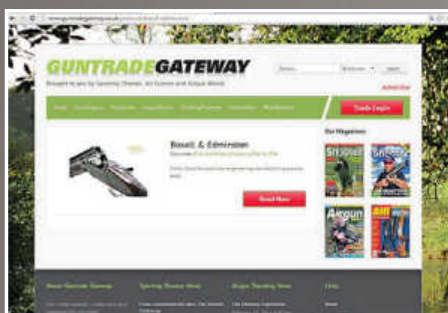
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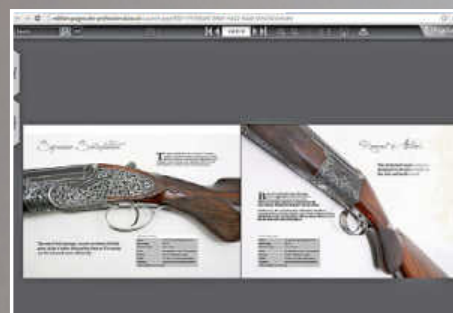
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AIRGUNS IN ARIZONA

The Shooting Party? Or Last of the Summer Wine? You decide.



This man never stops working.



Awwwww a lil' old scorpion at the shoot. Serious inconvenience is never far away in the desert.



Clearly Phoenix is larger than Tony realises.



Plenty of action going on over the four days.



THE HOTTEST

Silencer genius, Andrew Huggett says welcome to the 2015 Extreme Benchrest match in Arizona

I was pacing the floor at home, waiting for my nephew, Liam Keenan. This was the first time I'd ever taken 'staff' with me, and now I knew why. Two days before departure he called to say that his deportment had broken down and he couldn't fix it in time to get down to my place near Heathrow. Great - now I remembered why I like to travel alone. Well, as they say, 'it's not what you know, it's who you know'; enter stage left, one good friend, Mr Ben Taylor, and if you need to ask who this person is, do your homework. Ben just happened to call into the factory at the time that Liam realised he had no way of getting down to me - did I mention he is over 100 miles

away from me? Well done, Mr. T, and thank you for driving Liam down to my house, picking me up and then taking us both to the airport. What a star! Here, we met up with another good friend, Mr Ross Marshal, the guy from Gilbert Distributions, the compressor people.

SOME LIKE IT HOT ...

Okay, fast forward 5,257 miles and ten-plus hours; we cleared security, set off to pick up the hire car, stepped outside of the wonderfully air-conditioned terminal building, and ... BAM! Oh, the heat! No that's not right - I didn't think of it as 'heat'. I just thought, 'Wow! This is hot' - hot like I'd just walked into a furnace and it was something like 6pm, or

maybe 7pm. I can't remember details like time; I was in the process of being cooked alive, it was that hot! So I went to pick up the prepaid hire car and got fleeced for another \$300; this was America - if there is insurance for it, take it!

As is traditional on the Arizona trip, we headed straight from the airport to the 'BBQ' for all the trade/press people, and it was still hot, VERY HOT! Now, I'm not knocking your traditional, weekend UK barbecue, but this was something else. I was in heaven! There was the best food, and an endless supply of water, on ice, because it was rather hot there, like 30-plus degrees, and the moon and stars were out - that's not normal in my world. We left at

around 10pm; that's 6am according to my body clock! I needed to sleep, and fast.

AIRGUN CENTRAL, USA

I was up early-ish for breakfast with Liam and Tony, did I mention we picked up a certain fellow who goes by the name of Tony Belas - MD of Daystate? Oh well, we did. So off we set for the shop of all things airgun, the Mecca for airgun gear, Airguns of Arizona (AoA) - the guys who host this magnificent event. There were only a few staff members in because the rest were down at the range getting it ready for a mass of shooters to enjoy. How privileged I felt as I made my way past the waiting customers to go behind the scenes and raid the shelves for anything we needed; no, it wasn't

One man and his shop.

AIRGUNS
OF ARIZONA

ARIZONA BENCHREST



Please be me, please be me, please please.



COMPETITION!

quite like that, but close.

The guns had arrived safe and sound. Mr Belas had sent them a few weeks ago from good old Blighty, so we had three Daystate Pulsars; .177, .22, and .25, and one .303 Wolverine. I left Tony to fit scopes, and Liam to play on the indoor range. Now, to get a seat at the indoor shop range is a rare thing during the build-up to the event. Why? I hear you ask - because it's normally occupied, taken over by that FX crew and some guy called Ted, who seems to have a 'holdover' them all! That's a clever pun, by the way, but I guess if I have to point it out, it isn't so clever after all. Anyway, I'm talking about Ted Bier, absolute top chap, owner of a perpetual grin and master of Ted's Holdover, the super-successful You Tube channel.

RANGE TIME

So, it was time to head out to the range to get a feel for it and to set the guns up in 38 degrees of heat, but oh my! What a place! It's almost a mini Bisley, with ranges of various lengths all over the location. We airgunners had a section of the public range set aside for practice before the main event; you pay your money - \$10 - watch the safety video, and away you go. I must say, I have never in all my years of shooting come across safety on the range like I did there. The range officers, all three of them, had eyes everywhere, you got the feeling that if you put one foot wrong they'd be on to you and yes, they were on to me for putting one foot, four inches over a painted line - oops!

Now, I had heard a rumour

about this place and the wind, and it was true, the wind was coming from this way and that, and from directions it shouldn't, but I blame that on the barbecue. There was

"A mini Bisley, with ranges of various lengths"

even a mini twister whipping across our range, which brought out the humorous side of one of the range officers when he blamed it on us 'air' people blowing too much - they were human, after all.

A DIFFERENT BALL GAME

Anyway, guns sorted by those two, off for a late lunch then back to the shop, because we'd forgotten to register earlier for the shoot, and I was glad that we did go back, because Robert, the owner, took us all to a ball game that night at

Chase Field, Phoenix. I'd always wanted to go to a big ball game to watch some rounders, and the stadium was -well, this was America - it was huge - like proper

huge! Of course, it was everything I wanted it to be, and more. I didn't even have to leave my seat to get food or drink; a waitress comes to you. Result - and it had to be hotdogs, fries and a Bud. The first swing we saw and the bat shattered. This was going to be fun; they throw that ball at 90-plus mph, so no wonder the bats break!

The first day of competitive shooting arrived and the three amigos were all shooting in the field target, and on a day when the temperature goes over 40°C, if you »

AIRGUNS IN ARIZONA

Lambs to the Arizonian heatwave slaughter.

Huggetts aplenty were on show.



In the 105 degree heat, we had to resort to pouring water on our heads, because the only other cold liquid we had with us was beer and wasting a perfectly good beer would be alcohol abuse.



Maybe one day both feet will reach the floor!!



don't drink a litre of water an hour, without fail, you would be in serious trouble. The AoA staff have this covered, though; there are cooler boxes full of ice and water on every other firing point, and they're regularly topped up. Luckily for the shooters, all firing points have been cleared of cacti.

There are two targets per firing

cards over two days, 25 targets on each card, to qualify for the final on the Sunday, which is shot at 100 yards. I was going to shoot the .25 Pulsar for this, but lil ol' Tony liked it so much that he wanted to use it and yes, as you can guess, we were shooting in the same round. Luckily, the guys at AoA had asked me earlier if I'd shoot

and the next day was even worse - I only scored a 198. Any thoughts of winning, or even placing, were very distant memories, but - and a big 'but' at that - I wasn't there for the winning, although it would have been nice, and it's never a thought that's far away. It's the pure enjoyment of meeting the shooters and soaking up the atmosphere that brings me back year on year.

time to go and shoot some bigger boy's toy, and enter the AR15 - now that was fun - loud, but fun! I'd have got a better score with that as well!

"I must have had the worst score in the history of the shoot"

point, usually one near and the other further away, nothing too tricky for a competent FT shooter, but that's not me. I must have had the worst score in the history of the shoot; I could only concentrate on getting out of the heat.

THE MAIN EVENT

On to the main event - the 75-yard Extreme Benchrest. You shot two

their .25 Airwolf, which I did. I have to say, your first qualifying card, where you're trying to place a shot on a sub-10p-sized bull at 75 yards, is not the place to try out a new gun and try to learn where its sweet spot is pressure-wise, whilst using pellets straight from a tin. Well, that's my excuse, anyway. Needless to say, it wasn't a good card; 210 out of a possible 250,

PRACTISE MAKES ...

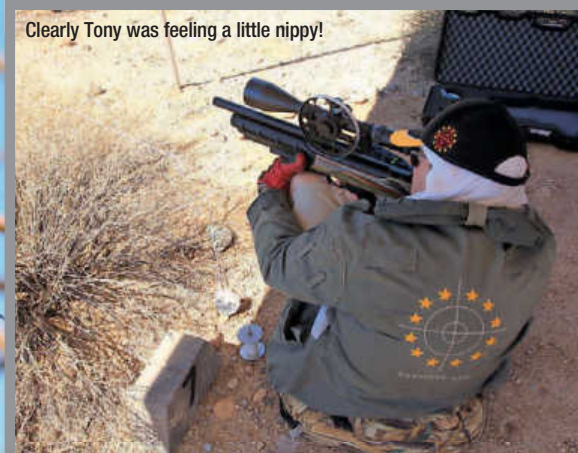
I can say that with confidence, because every year I slip further and further down the ladder on the results sheet. I guess you really should try to practise before you get there, rather than just shoot at this one event each year! Oh well, maybe next year I'll qualify for the final, if I'm lucky. They always say things happen for a reason, and if I had qualified, I wouldn't have had

SILHOUETTE SPEED SHOOT

Although I never made the final, it doesn't mean I didn't want to be around for the excitement of the day. I did slope off at some point to fulfil my own selfish needs with that AR15, but I made sure I caught all the action on the firing point when it mattered. From a spectator's point of view, the speed silhouette is like watching any close-run, speed-driven sport. The name of the game is simple; you have 16 targets to knock down - four each at 30, 40, 50 and 60 yards - and you have to knock these over in the shortest time to win. There's no loading a magazine



Clearly Tony was feeling a little nippy!



Let the games commence. Oh yes, all indicators on full tilt.



Not a bad combination I think.



beforehand, and no setting out individual pellets on the bench so you can pick them up easily - they must be in a tin, and no semi-autos allowed, or shotguns!

Next time you're out plinking,

"What happens in Arizona, stays in Arizona!"

give it a go. It'll be fun, and if you can deck them all in one minute, you could come out and win the \$500 prize. One thing you must make sure of is that the wind is so strong that it actually blows the silhouettes over whilst you're waiting to start. That was what happened here. They don't count, of course, and the event had to be halted a few times before it got under way, for that very reason, but when it started - oh boy!

It was all fingers and thumbs for those who started by loading a

magazine, rush, rush, rush; the other option was to load single-shot style, so what's the best option? Well, I've seen this event won using both methods. You can almost feel the tension and

frustration of the shooter who spins his target through 90 degrees; it has to go over and now he has just made it a whole lot harder for himself, the game's over at this point. Well done to the winner, Peykan Beyrami, with a winning time of 01:01.23.

THE GRANDEST OF FINALS

The final to end all finals was the 100 yards shoot and a prize of \$1000. The shooters were at their benches; some are fiddling with this and that, others are chatting

away with fellow shooters, whilst some just sit quietly, gathering their thoughts. You can probably guess which calibre won out on the day - the .30 took 8 of the top 10 places, and 6 of these were FX guns running smooth-twist barrels. Remember that guy at the start, Ben Taylor? Well, he's the inventor of these barrels, and should I mention that I made the dies that form this smooth twist? Well I did, and I have, so ner. Enough on that already!

You could see that the shoot wasn't going the way some would have liked, by the looks on their faces - that look of utter self-disgust, or is it disbelief? I know which I think it was - disbelief! I'd be happy to have hit the card, let alone get a shot in the scoring rings, and they were using the same size targets as they did for the 75-yard shoot!

There was no let-up in the wind either, it was howling through the range, flags were blowing all over the place, but I guess they were all in it together. The winner was a nice chap by the name of Jon Reimers, who shot two qualifying cards scoring 226 and 227, and his winning score on the day was 190 from a possible 250.

There was much more I could have spoken about, but you know what they say - 'What happens in Arizona stays in Arizona!' Don't worry, Ted, I'll delete the photos when I've stopped laughing, although that may be some time!

I hope that this has given you an insight into the event. Now we had the dinner and prize-giving to go to, not forgetting the amazing raffle draw that we'd been waiting for. Yee Haa! I won the scope I'd had my eye on! Result - I'm coming back next year for sure. ■

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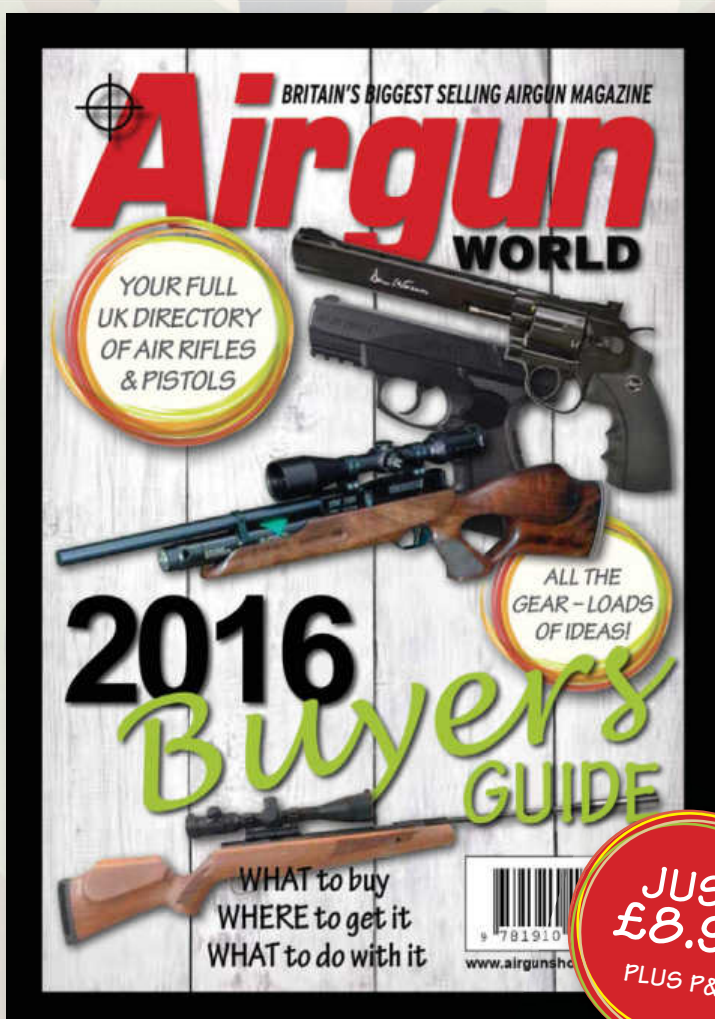
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